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Queering Gender in Ancient Greece

Fluid Bodies: Queering Gender in Ancient Greece

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation aims to challenge the long-held notion (both in popular culture and scholarly discourse) that gender, history, and time are stable constructs by re-examining gender ambiguity in ancient Greece. Gender ambiguous people are regularly studied as outliers to the 'natural' separation between 'male' and 'female'. Instead, I examine these cultural 'others' as queer entities unbound by the strictures of normative time and gender. My first chapter argues that distinctions between 'gender as cultural' and 'sex as natural' are outdated, noting the limitations of this framework in studies of gender in antiquity. Instead, I suggest that queer unhistoricist analysis, as well as use of anachronistic terminology, could expand our understanding of ancient queer gender. In Chapters 2 and 3, I examine the accounts of Phaethousa and Nanno (Hippocrates, fifth century BCE), and Diophantos and Kallon (Diodorus Siculus, first century BCE), who were all assigned female at birth, but experience spontaneous 'masculinisations' later in life. Beginning with Phaethousa and Nanno, I outline the Hippocratic author's use of language, noting how it, along with the actions of physicians, aims to thoroughly control Phaethousa's and Nanno's bodies by presenting them as diseased women. However, anachronistic terms such as 'transgender', 'intersex', and 'non-binary' can allow them to regain their bodily autonomy and truly exist in a 'grey space' of gender and time. In Chapter 3, I consider how Diophantos' and Kallon's lives become medicalised after physicians artificially reconstruct their bodies to conform to socially-normative ideals. Thus, they simultaneously conform to and subvert gender expectations. By doing so, they show how arbitrary, limiting, and fragile the cultural concepts of gender and time are, and firmly highlight humanity's obsession with creating an artificially constructed system of order.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

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PUBLICATIONS

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CONTENT NOTE

LGBTQI+ issues, Q-slur, H-slur (outdated term for intersex people), death, and discussions of: trans and intersex surgeries, medical and legal transition, and genitalia.

ABBREVIATIONS AND EDITIONS

Abbreviations used in the text:

LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. 1981–2009. Zürich: Artemis.
LSJ Online	Liddell, H.G., R. Scott, H.S. Jones, and R. Mckenzie, eds. 2011. *The online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English lexicon*. Irvine, CA: University of California, Irvine.
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary Online*. 2018. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
OLD	Glare, P.G.W., ed. 1982. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Abbreviations of names of ancient authors and texts follow these guidelines:

Greek	*LSJ Online*
Latin	*OLD*

Editions of ancient material frequent cited and/or quoted:

Aristotle. 1942. *Generation of Animals*, edited by A.L. Peck. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Diodorus Siculus. 1957. *Library of History, Volume XI: Fragments of Books 21–32*, edited by F.R. Walton, F.R. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hippocrates. 1994. *Hippocrates*. *Vol. VII*, edited by W.D. Smith. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hippocrates. 1928. *On Wounds in the Head. In the Surgery. On Fractures. On Joints. Mochlicon*, edited by E.T. Withington. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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INTRODUCTION

A QUEER QUERY OF TIME AND GENDER

> People assume that time is a strict progression of cause to effect, but actually – from a non-linear, non-subjective viewpoint – it's more like a big ball of wibbly-wobbly … timey-wimey … stuff.[1]

Time is incredibly complex according to the Doctor, the main character of the popular and long-running BBC sci-fi television series *Doctor Who* (1963–present). He is a Time Lord, a humanoid alien species able to live almost indefinitely by regenerating into a different incarnation when they die; they also travel in time and space, and thus become the guardians of, and authorities on, time itself. The Doctor moves through time in a non-linear fashion, defying traditional human models of life's birth-to-death progression, and finding that "Things don't always happen […] in quite the right order", experiencing the future and reliving histories at will.[2] For the culture that created him, he occupies a non-normalised life.

The Doctor can also transition through gender. The BBC recently announced that the fourteenth iteration of the famous character would be the first female Doctor in the show's history. I could therefore refer to the Doctor not as 'he', but perhaps with the singular gender-neutral pronoun 'they'. This pronoun has been used since the fourteenth century and is common in everyday speech to refer to someone whose gender is unknown or irrelevant, but only with the onset of both the feminist and transgender rights movements has it gained wide-spread usage.[3] In the time *Doctor Who* was first conceived, feminism was only beginning to gain ground in socio-political arenas, and 'he' could still be employed to describe a person whose gender was unknown.[4] I could therefore retrospectively use the pronoun 'they' to talk about a character created in a time before this pronoun was widely used.

Time and language thus both have an impact on the way we perceive the Doctor, who is themselves a culturally-constructed being; they reflect not only our social norms, but also our cultural progress. This perspective allows the Doctor to be fully realised as the boundary-breaker they are, living in completely non-linear time and utterly non-binary conceptions of the body. Indeed, their body is thoroughly fluid, constantly changing, and able to reflect the

[1] MacDonald (dir.) 'Blink' 2007.
[2] MacDonald (dir.) 'Blink' 2007.
[3] This is often the pronoun of choice for people with non-binary gender identities. See Stryker 2017, 22–24.
[4] See Baron 1981, 83–86; McConnell-Ginet 2011, 196–199; Stryker 2017, 22–24.

perspectives of a society that has evolved immensely since 1963. Using language that has more recently become widely accepted in mainstream culture ('they' pronouns) fully recognises the character of the Doctor as a queer entity. Yet is it possible to apply these ways of thinking to the ancient world, to a culture so far removed from our own in time and space? Can we truly 'queer' a culture that we cannot ever truly understand?

1. QUEERING HISTORY

1.1. WHAT IS 'QUEER'?

The word 'queer' initially only meant 'strange, peculiar, or odd', but came to be used derogatively against anyone who expressed (or was thought to express) same-gender attraction or love. However, during liberation movements of the 1980s and 1990s, 'queer' began to be reclaimed and has slowly acquired the increasingly positive tone it expresses today.[5] The word also gave its name to Queer Studies, the scholarly field which examines contemporary and historical examples of queerness, and originated from 'Gay and Lesbian Studies'. Initially, queer historians sought past examples of homosexual desire, examining the surrounding context and systematic erasure of same-gender attraction from history. We can therefore 'queer' history by expanding our understanding of the past, and questioning why certain groups have been erased from the dominant narrative of traditional history – even aurally, the word suggests this: 'queering' and 'querying' the past.

Yet for all its rebranding from Gay and Lesbian Studies to Queer Studies, the field has not completely taken on the full scope of the term. In contemporary political usage, 'queer' has become both an individual identity in and an umbrella term for the LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, plus) community.[6] This terminology securely locates transgender/trans (T) and intersex (I) people under the banner of 'queer'. Yet, as Viviane Namaste notes, these identities have been "continually and perpetually erased in the cultural and institutional world".[7] The field of queer history is no different, predominantly

[5] See *OED* 'queer'; Gamson 1995, 394–396. Due to the word's history, it is generally considered inappropriate for non-LGBTQI+ people to use this term in reference to the community.
[6] See McConnell-Ginet 2011, 238–241; Stryker 2017, 30. The acronym has many forms and is constantly being expanded. The '+' is regularly employed to recognise the many other diverse and/or newly-labelled identities under the banner. I will use 'queer' to refer to the LGBTQI+ community throughout this work in order to emphasise the connection Queer Studies has to the community.
[7] Namaste 2000, 2. From the outset, trans peoples have often been at the forefront of queer liberation movements, but this fact is often overlooked. See Stryker 2006, 7; Stryker 2017, 84–113, 120–122.

focusing on same-gender desire and eroticism, with transgender and intersex history largely confined to the last hundred years. Indeed, many prominent scholars have gone to great lengths to separate antiquity from Queer Studies because they believe the ancient world is too distant, and too far removed from our own conceptions of the world to warrant a search for ancient queerness.[8]

1.2. 'FACT' AND 'TRUTH'

Historians are regularly encouraged to approach the past objectively, attempting to remove their own contemporary cultural biases. Yet, this fails to acknowledge two major factors. Firstly, every reader will approach history with a unique and powerful perspective. Queer history was virtually non-existent until queer people began looking for it, utilising their own experiences of marginalisation in contemporary politics and society to combat their historical erasure.[9] Secondly, history itself is a text, a fluid and unstable narrative formed over a constant process of critiquing, expanding, and challenging the past. History is therefore written from the perspective of the present, constantly being altered. Viewing it as a stable narrative that contains unquestionable 'truths' overlooks its artificially-constructed nature, and oversimplifies the complexity of the past into a single linear narrative. To claim that history produces 'fact' and 'truth' ignores its instability, as what was a 'fact' yesterday can be a 'fiction' today.

In this dissertation, I challenge the long-held notion (both in popular culture and scholarly discourse) that history, time, and gender are stable constructs by examining gender ambiguity and non-conformity in ancient Greece. The ancient world proves an excellent location for this exploration because it is itself ambiguous; although full of relatively familiar stories and images, it is spatially, culturally, and chronologically distant and alien. I focus heavily on the power of language, particularly anachronistic language, as a useful analytical tool. Why should we not apply words such as 'transgender' or 'intersex' to individuals from a culture that had no conception of these terms? How can anachronism expand our understanding not only of ancient queerness, but also of historical linearity?

[8] See Chapter 1, 15.

[9] Combating the historical erasure of queerness "has been a crucial part of finding out about ourselves as contemporary [queer people] and LGBT folk. It has at times provided a sense of history to those who have found themselves left out of world histories that stigmatize or simply ignore gender and sexual 'outlaws'' or non-conformists." See Gibson, Meem, and Alexander 2014, 4.

2. Queering Gender in Antiquity

2.1. Ancient Greek Gender Non-Conformity

The world of ancient Greece was full of gender ambiguity, particularly in the creative fields of myth-making, art, literature, and theatre: the god Dionysos embodied both masculinity and femininity in his behaviour and dress; Hermaphroditos simultaneously had typically 'male' and 'female' anatomy; Kaineus and Teiresias transitioned between genders, transformed by divine and magical arts; the Amazons were warrior-women excelling in traditionally masculine pursuits; Medeia and Klytaimnestra asserted themselves in the typically masculine public sphere; theatre actors and the attendees of religious festivals would often momentarily take on the clothing and characteristics of another gender. These ritual practices of gender ambiguity were merely situational and temporary, and these mythical figures were regularly regarded as 'others', challengers to dominant social norms. However, non-normalised expressions of genders, and the blurring of boundaries between 'male' and 'female', all existed in the stories that the ancient world created. It is interesting that in a culture rich with such gender ambiguity, 'scientific' texts – those concerned with medicine or philosophy, rather than stories or mythical tales directly – struggle to acknowledge it unless it refers to the world of the gods. Indeed, authors such as the fifth-century BCE physician Hippocrates and the first-century BCE historian Diodorus Siculus attempt to maintain a clear distinction between the world of humans and the realm of the gods, particularly when describing gender ambiguity. Although acceptable for divine and mythical creatures, when 'real' humans are ambiguous in their genders, it is treated as an illness and an oddity.

Gender ambiguous and non-conforming people are regularly examined as outliers to the 'natural' separation between 'male' and 'female'. However, I aim to reverse this practice by examining, firstly, how the gender binary limits our understanding of ambiguity, and secondly, how we can study ambiguous beings as queer entities entirely removed from binary norms. My first chapter discusses terminology and methodology, beginning with an exploration of the division of 'sex' and 'gender' into separate concepts. This dichotomy is increasingly challenged by scholars, and I show that dividing these concepts not only oversimplifies them, but also limits our analyses of the past. I further discuss and challenge various theories on the function of gender in antiquity, before considering the usefulness of Queer Unhistoricism, a theory that defines time as non-linear and multidimensional in order to re-examine historical examples of queerness.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I discuss two remarkably similar cases of people who would today be considered transgender (specifically trans men or transmasculine) and/or intersex. Phaethousa and Nanno (in Hippocrates), and Diophantos and Kallon (in Diodorus), are all assigned female at birth, but experience spontaneous 'masculinisations', forming exceptional examples for direct comparison. They are also particularly significant as they are the only two ancient Greek texts produced before the turn of the millennium that discuss non-mythological cases of gender transition. Although other texts in this period discuss gender ambiguity, change, and non-conformity, they are most often limited to the mythological stories, or to generalised examples in the works of philosophers or medical writers.[10]

Chapter 2 focuses on the Hippocratic case of Phaethousa and Nanno. I begin with a detailed examination of the author's language, which continually dismisses their gender ambiguity by referring to them as merely 'diseased women'. This perception of Phaethousa and Nanno has persisted in their reception, and they are frequently considered 'problems' that need to be solved. However, the application of anachronistic language, using terms such as 'transgender', 'intersex', and 'non-binary', can allow Phaethousa and Nanno to regain their bodily autonomy and truly exist as the boundary-breaking beings that they are. In Chapter 3, I examine how Diophantos and Kallon become medicalised after physicians artificially reconstruct their bodies to conform to socially-normative ideals. Diodorus presents gender ambiguity as an 'error of nature', able to be rectified by human intervention; however, although forced to subscribe to traditional masculinity, Diophantos and Kallon are nevertheless always considered somehow queer by their author and later scholars. They thus come to truly embody transgender and intersex experiences, part of society, but also considered different or 'other' at the same time. By expanding our narrative of historical queerness, we can not only combat the historical erasure of gender ambiguity, but also acknowledge the ways that arbitrary constructs like time and gender have limited the study of non-normalised individuals.

[10] See Arist. *GA*. 746b21–747a4, 767b3–773a24, 784a6–11, *Ph*. 199a33–199b4; Hp. *Aër*. 22, *Vict.* (*Regimen*) 1.28; Pl. *Sym*. 189d–193a.

CHAPTER 1

GENDER AND SEX: THEORIES AND METHODOLOGIES

> If sex were simply a natural fact, we could never write its history. And then one of our favorite modern projects – to describe the development and periodization and dialectical interaction of the sex/gender systems of the varied societies we know – would have to be abandoned. But sex is not, except in a trivial and uninteresting sense, a natural fact.[1]

In *Before Sexuality*, John Winkler profoundly questions our understanding of sex, which is almost inextricably tied to ideas of nature, biology, and anatomy. He destabilises our long-held assumptions about what is natural or cultural; sex cannot be a natural fact because it is influenced by cultural perceptions of 'correctness'. Yet Winkler's statement is contradictory for two reasons: firstly, his essay deals primarily with the sexual activities of ancient Greek men, not the physiological make-up of their bodies. Secondly, in the volume that Winkler's essay appears in, *Before Sexuality*, the editors define sex as the "erogenous capacities and genital functions of the human body", and therefore "Sex, so defined, is a natural fact".[2] Winkler is one of those editors, and he thus appears to contradict himself. Able to refer to an act or to physiology, and influenced by ideas of nature and biology, 'sex' is clearly difficult to define. How then can we attempt to understand the concept of sex? More importantly, can sex *not* be a natural fact?

1. SEX AND GENDER

1.1. NATURE VS. CULTURE

Sex and gender have typically been defined as separate concepts within a nature vs. culture dichotomy. According to Monique David-Ménard and Penelope Deutsche, this originated with Richard Stoller's 1968 definition of gender as the 'aspects of sexuality' that were determined by culture and learned at birth, and sex as the anatomical and physiological factors that dictate whether one is male or female.[3] As a result, sex became a stable biological entity, whereas gender became a cultural concept possible to theorise and deconstruct because culture itself

[1] Winkler 1990, 171.
[2] Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin 1990, 3.
[3] David-Ménard and Deutscher 2014, 375.

was fluid and changeable.[4] Judith Butler further developed this idea, arguing that gender was entirely produced by social and cultural practices. For Butler, gender was repeatedly realised and maintained in performance; it is not 'done' alone, but practiced with others, thus creating regulatory practices that govern how gender should be 'correctly' performed.[5] Culturally-mediated understandings of 'masculine' or 'feminine' also affect how we perform, create, and maintain what Butler terms "intelligible genders", which reflect culturally-normative notions about how gender should physically, sexually, mentally, and socially exist. Those who do not follow these norms, who demonstrate discontinuity and incoherence among their various gender and sexual expressions, become an 'other'; Butler, for instance, notes that individuals who experience same-gender attraction could be considered culturally unintelligible.[6] Her work therefore radically repositions our thinking on gender and culture, demonstrating their cyclical relationship: social norms regulate how gender should be 'correctly' performed, and performance of gender perpetuates these social norms.

Unlike gender, which could be theorised and deconstructed, sex has long been considered a stable entity separate from culture and belonging purely to the world of biology and 'nature'. However, sex itself has a history, which in turn places it within a cultural and social context. Certainly, 'facts' about sex are often produced to serve the political or cultural interests of a particular society and time. As Thomas Laqueur notes, sex is "situational" because "no one was much interested in looking for evidence of two distinct sexes, [and] the anatomical and concrete physiological differences between men and women, until such differences became politically important."[7] This definition of sex as a differentiator between two stable categories – male or female based on physiological characteristics – is open to change depending on cultural evolution. Even the biological grounding of sex, the fact it is based on supposedly stable and 'natural' biological features, is situational. Sex can be determined by various combinations of anatomical, hormonal, and/or chromosomal factors, which can all be altered by both natural and human intervention.[8] Sex therefore has a history and it has cultural framing, becoming just as unstable as gender.

[4] This separation allowed early feminist scholars and activists to negate claims about women's supposed 'inferiority' to men based on 'natural' anatomical, and physical characteristics. See Butler 1999, 9–10; Evans 2011, 605; Holmes 2012, 3.
[5] Butler 1999, 25–33; Butler 2004, 1.
[6] Butler 1999, 22–24, 147.
[7] Laqueur 1990, 10–11. See also Butler 1999, 10–12, 23–24; David-Ménard and Deutscher 2014, 376; Eckert 2003, 3; Epstein 1990, 101.
[8] See Chapter 3, 45–50.

> If the immutable character of sex [can be thus] contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all.[9]

As Butler notes, gender and sex cannot be defined as separate concepts.[10] 'Gender' can be employed to describe concepts relating to the organisation of society, biology, and culture according to the binary of masculine and feminine. Our understanding of gender, either as a concept or on an individual level, can therefore be influenced by various factors including the anatomical, biological, mental, cultural, or social aspects of a lived experience; it is this very broad definition of gender that I will employ, one that does not separate 'gender' and 'sex'.

1.2. 'THE BODY'

Without the dichotomy of gender and sex, we can critically examine the complex ways culture and biology influence the body, which is itself a concept with multiple applications. It can be understood as the physical form of a single person in a moment of time. As Mireille Lee notes, a person's body forms the boundary between the self and society, and therefore, every individual human body is subject to culturally-mediated norms that influence how it is shaped, maintained, and socially interpreted.[11] Thus, cultural constructions of 'intelligible' gender directly influence a person's physical form, and therefore the body becomes a means of reinforcing and adhering to cultural gender intelligibility. However, neither social norms nor bodily boundaries are fixed; society evolves over time and redefines its stance on 'correctness', 'naturalness', or 'normality'; likewise, the body can be significantly modified in various permanent and temporary ways. Thus, the body cannot be considered a stable entity, but rather a fluid form reflecting, or even challenging, social norms.

Rather than focusing on the individual physical form, Laqueur conversely, examines two different conceptions of 'the body'. Firstly, the body can be a transcultural phenomenon, a physical human form recognisable to a variety of cultures and across time. Secondly, the body can be theorised by various groups working within the cultural context of their time. Laqueur

[9] Butler 1999, 10–11.
[10] If I need to emphasise a physical/biological expression of gender, I will refer to 'the body' or 'physical gender'. Cf. Eckert 2003, 3.
[11] Lee 2009, 156.

thus wishes to distinguish between the body as a transcultural (and transchronological) concept, and the body as discursively-produced and dependent on specific cultural contexts. However, this is perhaps too simplistic. As Gloria Ferrari notes, scholars have begun to reconsider this division, arguing that the body should instead be understood as multiple 'bodies'.[12] There can be physical, cultural, discursive, and ahistorical bodies that may or may not be transcultural. For instance, Lin Foxhall states that "[men] and women in the past looked physically 'male' and 'female', in the same basic ways as we do today" and therefore, the materiality of the body links us to the past.[13] But this is impossible to establish. When examining other cultures and time periods, we can to a certain extent recognise a body as human, but every single culture in any time period would have varying conceptions of what *makes* a body human. There can thus never truly be a transcultural body because 'human' itself is a discursive and socially-mediated category.[14] Just like gender, the body can be understood as an individual lived experience, a biological concept, and a culturally-mediated idea all at the same time. Gender can be inscribed on the body and vice versa, creating and maintaining social norms that can change when applied to different cultures and time periods.

2. Gender in Antiquity

2.1. Conceptualising Gender in Antiquity

The ancient Greeks did not have the same understanding of gender that we have today, and did not necessarily subscribe to the debated 'nature vs. culture' dichotomy of gender; however, as Brooke Holmes notes, they still questioned what constitutes male and female, masculinity and femininity.[15] Male citizens in ancient Greece occupied the highest social stratum and played an active role in political and social life; striving for intellectual excellence and philosophical elevation all became associated with a masculine ideal. Physically, possessing a penis, testes, body hair, and facial hair was associated with masculinity and tied to concepts of masculine strength.[16] Thus the boundaries of male and female were structured around particular socially-mediated roles and physical expressions. People who moved between or beyond those

[12] Ferrari 2009, 4.
[13] Foxhall 2013, 3.
[14] On the conflation between intersex natures and 'monstrosity' (i.e. non-humanness) see Chapter 3, 50–52.
[15] Holmes 2012, 1–2.
[16] See Chapters 2 and 3; Arist. *HA* 489a10–14, 493a25, 518a33–35; Arist. *GA* 716a4–b1, 718a11–15, 727a16–19, 728b26–27, 783b18–784a12; Hp. *Nat.Puer.* 9; Dean-Jones 1994, 134; Dover 1974, 96–99; Holmes 2012, 15, 44; Jones 1987, 63–72, 84–94; Kent 2006, 86–89; Laqueur 1990, 28–30.

boundaries were demonised as 'other'.[17] Phaethousa, Nanno, Diophantos, and Kallon – discussed at length in the following chapters – are all assigned female at birth, but begin to take on physical features (Diophantos and Kallon also take on social characteristics) typically considered 'male', and they are immediately 'othered' as a result.

The four cases that I will discuss all clearly demonstrate that physical bodies and social standing could be relatively fluid in ancient Greece, existing in a different framework to our own. Thomas Laqueur, for instance, argues that a two-sex model of the body has existed since the eighteenth century CE, which designates two completely separate and different types of bodies, male and female. Prior to that, conversely, there was only a one-sex model in which women were seen as men turned inside out.[18] The body was thus fluid and open to change. Maud Gleason similarly notes that gender in the ancient world was seen as something that needs to be physically and mentally moulded onto a body – in many cases quite literally, with certain practices for swaddling, massaging, and squeezing babies into desirable 'masculine' and 'feminine' shapes.[19] Thus, both Gleason and Laqueur highlight the fluidity of the body; depending on education and physical moulding, one's body could shift into maleness or femaleness relatively easily.

Conceivably then, this type of 'sliding-scale' model of gender existed in antiquity, rather than our model based on gender difference. Holmes and Helen King both highlight several texts in the *Hippocratic Corpus* and Aristotle's works supporting this idea. The Hippocratic text *Regimen 1*, for example, designates three kinds of men and three kinds of women, each corresponding to a different degree of 'maleness' or 'femaleness' resulting from various combinations of 'seed' from both parents at conception. In *Generation of Animals*, Aristotle argued that men could 'lose masculinity' and descend into 'undesirable' femininity; for example, a castrated man would become 'like a woman'.[20] Moreover, as Gleason and Holmes both note, gender in antiquity needed to be performed and maintained through diet, exercise, intellectual pursuits, and social conduct. If a man did not maintain a 'masculine' diet, good level of exercise, challenge himself intellectually, and conduct himself socially as a masculine

[17] See Introduction p.4. This also included *kinaidoi* (men who preferred a passive role in same-gender intercourse), *androgynoi* (seen as 'male-bodied' but feminine in every other way), eunuchs, and intersex people. See duBois 1991, 111–117, 119–122; Foxhall 2013, 80–84, 89; Gleason 1990, 394–398; Holmes 2012, 76–79; Rowlands 2014, 41; Winkler 1990, 176–186.
[18] Laqueur 1990, 8, 4–11.
[19] Gleason 1990, 392–394, 402–406.
[20] See Hp. *Vict.* (*Regimen*) 1.28–29; Arist. *GA* 766a27–28; Holmes 2012, 28–44; King 1998, 7–11.

man – paying attention to the way he spoke, walked, or engaged in sexual activities – his gender could become suspect, and his body and social standing could 'descend' into the realms of unacceptable femininity.[21]

This sliding-scale model can account for the physical and social fluidity of gender in the ancient world, but it does not acknowledge its remarkably fixed nature. Aristotle, for instance, argues that a eunuch is 'like a woman', but will never actually 'be' a woman. Similarly, he states that women can never truly build up enough internal body heat to become a man, who were typically considered warmer than women.[22] It seems that bodies in the ancient world were not thought of as truly fluid and existing on a continuum. Indeed, apart from the sliding-scale model, King tracks two other possible frameworks of gender in antiquity: firstly, one in which women are entirely inferior to men – noticeable in Aristotle's claim that a woman can never become a man and demonstrated by Laqueur's statement that women were seen as inversed men – and secondly, a model similar to ours that saw women as entirely different to men. Supporting this last option, King notes that women's diseases were considered so different from men's to require the entirely separate medical field of gynaecology.[23]

It is difficult to determine an all-encompassing theory of gender in antiquity not only because of the contradictory nature of our extant evidence, but also because, as Foxhall points out:

> we cannot detach ourselves from gender as we live it ourselves in our own time and place, [meaning] that we must always be interpreting gender in the past through the filter of our own present, however hard we try to be scholarly and objective.[24]

This leaves us in a conundrum. Our ideas about gender difference, the still-pervasive notions about gender as divided into two separate concepts (nature and culture) that I discussed earlier – particularly the notion that biology puts forward ahistorical, 'natural' truths about gender – constantly influence our readings of ancient texts. How then can we try to conceptualise gender in the past if we cannot leave aside the present? The solution should surely be to leave aside our modern assumptions of culture, nature, and biology, and attempt to see how gender functions outside of those constraints.

[21] Gleason 1990, 392–406; Holmes 2012, 79–81, 110–128.
[22] Arist *GA* 728a17–25, 746b33–747a4, 775a14–20. See also Holmes 2012, 44.
[23] King 1998, 11.
[24] Foxhall 2013, 4

2.2. BROOKE HOLMES: THROW OUT YOUR CULTURAL BIASES

Holmes proposes a different theory, which synthesises elements of King's three possible models for gender in antiquity. Examining ancient stories of physical fluidity, social variability, and various practices that existed to maintain intelligible genders, Holmes concludes that although gender was remarkably changeable, the ancients did not believe in a fully fluid, one-sex body as Laqueur suggests. She also emphasises that gender operated in often highly constrictive ways in the ancient world, reinforcing cultural norms and constraining how individuals expressed themselves in their physicality, clothing, voice, interests, and their perception of others. To truly have an understanding of gender, therefore, we would have to acknowledge that all three models outlined by King existed simultaneously: fluidity, sexual difference, and patriarchal hierarchy. We would also need to acknowledge the fragmentary nature of our sources, the variety and plurality of meanings, and the range of different experiences over time. As Holmes says, this is perhaps too much information to retain all at once.[25]

Holmes therefore proposes an almost all-encompassing theory, interpreting gender in the ancient world as something that was simultaneously fixed and fluid; it existed on a continuum on which – although able to move – maleness and femaleness were more-or-less fixed. Certainly, Holmes' theory allows enough variation to be comfortably applied to just about every ancient Greek or Roman text that deals with gender. Indeed, the stories of Phaethousa, Nanno, Diophantos, and Kallon discussed in the following chapters all demonstrate this fixed yet fluid model, with bodies and social expressions of gender simultaneously open to change but also more-or-less fixed. Yet Holmes' model is not without its problems. She directly acknowledges that her references to 'the ancients' is problematic, using it as an overly simplistic blanket term to describe a world that spanned vast time periods (prehistory to the early medieval period), space (Britain to India), and political organisations (democracy to monarchy).[26] Thus, we could never truly have a theory of gender in antiquity that is all-encompassing, applicable to these diverse places, periods, and cultures that would have changed over time. Her theory therefore appears applicable to just about any ancient text precisely because it is designed to be suitable to such a vast area, and therefore it cannot be specific when it deals with such diverse temporal and cultural contexts.

[25] Holmes 2012, 25.
[26] Holmes 2012, 7, 11–13.

2.3. THE SECOND PROBLEM WITH HOLMES' THEORY: A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Leslie Feinberg addresses an important issue in hir book *Transgender Warriors*:[27]

> We have a history filled with militant hero/ines. Yet therein lies the rub! How can I tell you about their battles when the words woman and man, feminine and masculine, are almost the only words that exist in the English language to describe all the vicissitudes of bodies and styles of expression?[28]

Zie thus points out one of the biggest limitations in the study of gender; it is binary, splitting the world into men and women, male and female, whereas ambiguity is seen as an outlier. Scholars, including Holmes, always start from the assumption that maleness and femaleness constitute two stable categories, and that anyone who does not conform to socially-normative views of binary gender – regardless of the period of analysis – is automatically an 'other' or a 'non-conformer'.[29] As Feinberg thus points out, language itself is limiting, affecting not only our verbal expressions but also our capacity to imagine anything outside of binary gender norms.

In more recent years, new terminology has evolved, which is capable of describing a vast range of different gender experiences. Susan Stryker particularly examines the term 'transgender/trans', which by the 1990s gained the definition it retains today: an umbrella term referring to anyone who does not strictly identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. It can thus encompass any kind of variation from binary gender norms and expectations.[30] Other terms have also arisen including non-binary (people whose gender identity is not exclusively male or female), which also comes under the banner of 'trans', as well as intersex (people whose bodies – including any chromosomal, hormonal, and/or anatomical features – do not fit into traditional definitions of 'male body' or 'female body').[31] These terms were created due to the gap in our language, and consequently our understanding, of gender ambiguity. However, despite their necessary evolution, they are nevertheless mediated by the gender binary. Notice that each definition could only be written by referring to binary gender; we still need to use the words 'man' or 'woman', 'masculine' or 'feminine' to define them. Nevertheless, although limited by social norms, this new language provides us with an

[27] I use Feinberg's preferred pronouns zie/hir rather than she/her or he/him.
[28] Feinberg 1996, ix.
[29] See Eckert 2003, 3–6.
[30] Stryker 2017, 36. I will use transgender' and 'trans' interchangeably. 'Trans', 'intersex', and 'non-binary' are all adjectives not nouns.
[31] This is not an exhaustive list and new terms are constantly arising. See glossary in Stryker 2017, 10–44.

expanded vocabulary beyond a simple binary division, and can thus expand our understanding of gender ambiguity.

Scholars of antiquity tend to shy away from this new terminology, even when discussing ambiguity – instances where this language could be incredibly useful – claiming it is anachronistic. Interestingly, words like 'sex' and 'gender' describe modern concepts that would be alien to the ancient world, despite the fact that they derive from ancient Greek and Latin roots.[32] It is more noteworthy, therefore, that scholars of antiquity including Holmes continue to use these words, whose application to the ancient world would also be anachronistic. There is a difference here. Where 'sex' and 'gender' (and their separation) are widely accepted words that uphold and maintain social norms, words like 'trans', 'intersex', and 'non-binary' are seen to belong to a minority community who question and challenge social normativity.[33]

This is the other main issue with Holmes' theory. She claims that her model does away with the binaries of sex and gender, as well as male and female. Although her theory largely collapses the modern distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' – if both concepts are fixed and fluid, claims about an inherent difference between 'natural' and 'cultural' is negated – and she acknowledges it is inappropriate to apply these terms to the ancient world, she nevertheless uses them. Her theory can only dissolve this binary to a certain extent, largely because she still retains these terms with their inherent culturally-loaded meanings. It would have been far more radical to truly collapse their meanings, and thus acknowledge the many applications of gender, including physical, social, cultural, mental, and personal. Furthermore, the binary of male and female lies at the core of her theory: maleness and femaleness remain more-or-less fixed at either end of her continuum. She thus examines ancient conceptions of gender in a way that is not especially nuanced, from the perspective of seeing how the 'abnormal', 'ambiguous', or 'non-conforming' person can complicate a strict separation between male and female. In these types of analyses, the 'non-conformer' presents a problem for binary gender. Instead, it would be far more interesting to examine how maleness and femaleness – that is to say, social norms dictating that only two 'intelligible' genders exist – complicate our understanding of 'non-conformity'. What would be the advantage of examining the 'other' not just as a complication to binary gender norms, but as queer entities unbound by the strictures of gender dualism?

[32] In Latin, '*sexus*' and '*genus*', as well as ancient Greek 'γένος' (*genos*) could be used to talk about maleness and femaleness, masculinity and femininity in a very general sense. The words evolved into contemporary 'sex' and 'gender', but they had very different meanings in antiquity. See Holmes 2012, 10.
[33] See Chapter 2, 29–38.

3. Queer Approaches

3.1. Queer Studies and Gender-Diversity

The question of language has plagued the field of Queer Studies since its inception. Michel Foucault, whose famous three-volume text *The History of Sexuality* spearheaded the discipline, argued that homosexuality (and indeed sexuality as some type of personal identity closely linked to one's idea of 'the self') did not exist before the nineteenth century. Therefore, he states, we cannot use the term to describe any events or people before then.[34] Studies of queer history were fraught with debates about whether it was appropriate to use the terms 'homosexual' or 'homosexual desire' at all. Indeed, David Halperin notes

> I didn't have a language for articulating systematically the discontinuities between ancient Greek sexual attitudes or practices and my own. Or, at least, I didn't have such a language until the mid-1980s when it was provided me by […] the work of social constructionist historians of homosexuality.[35]

This social constructionist view of history dictates that scholars must be aware of the social and historical context of the period they are studying; thus, it is incorrect to speak of homosexuality or homosexual desire in ancient Greece when they supposedly had no such concept, only the notion of active and passive roles in sexual intercourse. Language thus becomes a point of contention. In this framework, queer scholars cannot claim to be studying the history of homosexuality unless it is a history that begins in the nineteenth century.

How then do we talk about a concept we can trace, but that has different or no terminology? Indeed, nineteenth- and twentieth-century explorations of sexuality tended to group together trans people and those who experienced same-gender love. The nineteenth-century scholar Karl Heinrich Ulrichs formed a biologically-inclined theory of 'Urnings', people like himself who practiced male same-gender love. He described them as '*anima muliebris virili corpore inclusa*', a female soul enclosed in a male body. Same-gender love was thus coupled with gender non-conformity.[36] Magnus Hirschfeld, an early pioneer of the queer rights movement who established the first 'sexology' institute in 1919, considered trans and same-gender loving people to exist as 'sexual intermediaries' on a spectrum from a hypothetical 'pure male' to

[34] Foucault 1984, 43; Gibson, Meem, and Alexander 2014, 3; Halperin 1990, 6–7, 24–36, 64–65. Cf. Champagne 2013, 1005–1006.
[35] Halperin 2004, 3.
[36] Halperin 1990, 4; Stryker 2017, 52–53.

'pure female'.[37] Thus, from this early stage, queer gender was not separated from queer sexual desire. Both were seen as ultimately 'other' when compared to normalised conceptions of gender and sexuality.[38]

3.2. QUEER UNHISTORICISM

As Elizabeth Freeman notes, early Queer Theory predominantly centred on the concept of the avant-garde, which posited the past as the 'other' of the present – just as queer sexuality was the 'other' of normative sexual practices.[39] This theoretical framework insisted that historical context be understood and observed when studying the past. In this altericist and historicist system, anachronism becomes a problem because it removes historical distance and disregards historical context, collapsing past and present.[40] As a result, the concept of history as something different to and removed from the present is abandoned. However, what Sarah Ferguson calls the "deconstructive turn" – the critical trend arguing that texts are always already severed from their context and that no historical context can guarantee any kind of stability of meaning – began to radically critique the 'text of history'.[41] It is this trend that prompted queer scholars to question not only "a historicism that proposes to know the definitive difference between the past and the present", but also culturally-created structures such as history, sexuality, time, and gender.[42]

In particular, recent movements in Queer Theory turns to the "free-floating, endlessly mobile, and infinitely subversive capacities" of the term 'queer' to radically question the nature of history as a dominant narrative that privileges the perspectives of the powerful.[43] In particular, Queer Unhistoricism thoroughly upsets traditional, linear historical narratives by asking: if we are studying people who were perceived to be out of place in historical societies, why then should they be bound by traditional history? Initially termed 'homo-history' by its earliest proponents Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, they sought to 'queer' history and stated

[37] Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin 1990, 11–12; Hirschfeld 2006, 28–29, 34–39; Stryker 2017, 54–55.
[38] Queer Theory itself formed around an idea of the transgender figure. Trans people were seen as crossing boundaries of gender and sexuality, just like Queer Theory traversed different methodologies and identities. See Prosser 2006, 258–259.
[39] Freeman 2010, xiii. See also Goldberg and Menon 2005, 1608–1609; Matzner 2016, 181; Prosser 2006, 258–261; Traub 2013, 21.
[40] Bevir 2011, 25–26; Jardine 2000, 251–252.
[41] Dinshaw et al. 2007, 185; Schmitz 2007, 160.
[42] Goldberg and Menon 2005, 1609.
[43] Traub 2013, 33.

that "Far from being ahistorical – or somehow outside history – unhistoricism would acknowledge that history as it is hegemonically understood today is inadequate [for] housing the project of queering […]."[44] Because queer individuals have largely been erased from history, Queer Unhistoricism seeks to not only expand the narrative of their pasts, but also to re-examine history itself. It therefore re-interprets culturally-normative perceptions of time. Time is usually thought of as having clearly defined beginning and end points, with people experiencing birth, adolescence, reproduction, and death along a particular, linear, culturally-imposed timeline; conversely, as Jack Halberstam notes, a queer individual's experience of time (including puberty, procreation, and death) takes place in a different manner to the normative model, in an alternative temporality.[45] Queer Time is therefore non-linear, fluid, and multi-dimensional.[46] When this concept of queer, non-linear time is applied to historical periods, anachronism becomes a useful tool to expand our understanding of people who did not occupy gender or sexual norms of their time.

Many unhistoricist scholars such as Madhavi Menon, Jonathan Goldberg, Carla Freccero, and Carolyn Dinshaw focus on queering periods other than the ancient world, and they examine same-gender desire rather than non-normalised genders. Nevertheless, Queer Unhistoricism provides an excellent opportunity to critically examine the histories of transgender and intersex people. The ancient world is a particularly potent place to locate such a discussion about time and history. Whenever we study Classics, we are dealing with only a limited number of texts from a vast body of now lost or fragmentary works, and these texts will have survived centuries of copy mistakes, translation, editing, and damages. As a result, no scholar of antiquity can say with certainty that the words we read truly are the words written by an ancient author, nor can we confirm exactly where, when, and by whom they were composed. Classical texts in their very nature are thus fragmentary, and have a complex relationship with time, simultaneously existing both inside linear time (e.g. Plato wrote before Aristotle), and outside linear time (Aristotle's works may have informed the way Plato was commented on, understood, and even preserved) – and perhaps even more interestingly, they have continued to influence scholarship for centuries (Aristotle and Plato informed and continue to play a role in Western philosophy). The ancient world thus exists simultaneously in the past and the present.

[44] Goldberg and Menon 2005, 1609.
[45] Halberstam 2005, 175.
[46] See Dinshaw et al. 2007, 178–183, 186–187, 193; Freeman 2010, 3–7; Halberstam 2005, 2–4; Traub 2013, 22.

Moreover, terms used to denote identities that fall under the banner of queer, such as 'transgender', 'intersex', and 'homosexual', all derive from Greek and Latin roots. They are thus simultaneously ancient and modern, both are and are not anachronistic. Furthermore, Classics always recognised its intersex history, best exemplified by the deity Hermaphroditos, whose name evolved into the now out-dated term 'hermaphrodite' and 'hermaphroditism'. The simple fact that language has changed, 'hermaphrodite' now largely abandoned in favour of 'intersex', is itself an example of the artificiality of history and its ability to be changed and shaped over time. History is thus culturally constructed, and able to be changed and shaped over time. Queer Unhistoricism can therefore help us uncover hidden histories, ones that require a new perspective, which may not have been available to previous scholars. It challenges deeply entrenched ideas about history as progressive and linear. Likewise transgender and intersex figures present a challenge to dominant modes of thought in which 'male' and 'female', 'man' and 'woman' are naturally – rather than socially – constructed ideas.

4. Conclusion: Queering Gender

Despite the fact that gender has typically been divided into its cultural aspects (gender) and biological expressions (sex), scholarship is beginning to recognise that this is too simplistic. Gender in all its applications – physical, social, mental, personal – has been conceptualised and controlled in different ways throughout history, making its study, separated from contemporary biases, very difficult. However, despite arguments and assumptions that the ancient Greeks were so different from us today, scholars so often impose modern binaries of gender and a division of 'natural vs. cultural' onto ancient societies, unable to see beyond these deeply-ingrained cultural constructs. Queer ways of examining the world and re-thinking time can perhaps move us beyond this. Conceptually, gender is culturally locked into a linear timeline considered 'normal'. However, when we consider that social norms are fluid, then the bodies and minds they are imposed on likewise adopt this fluidity. Change, fluidity, and ambiguity have the potential to further our understanding of gender, both today and in the ancient world, and also strongly indicate the arbitrary nature of human constructs. Furthermore, a queer unhistoricist examination of the world can help us fully understand that ambiguity – the 'grey area' between the two traditional genders, a space typically regarded as unstable and transient – could in fact be one of stability.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEMS OF LANGUAGE: HIPPOCRATES' 'WOMEN'

> The grey area, I'd discovered, had been misnamed: really the grey area was a whole other spectrum of colours new to the eye. […] She was so boyish it was girlish, so girlish it was boyish, she made me want to rove the world writing our names on every tree.[1]

Gender is often thought to exist on a spectrum with masculinity and femininity at either end, and the space in between – the grey area – as the ambiguous mid-point. In Ali Smith's 2007 novel *Girl meets boy*, Robin Goodman is the boyish girl and the girlish boy, embodying a complete confusion of gender norms, and living entirely on a "whole other spectrum of colours". As Smith suggests, gender is far more complex than a simple spectrum, and gender ambiguity is a space far richer and wider-ranging than merely the 'grey area' between masculinity and femininity. However, despite Smith's attempts to present Robin as the 'girlish boy and boyish girl', and despite the gender ambiguity and fluidity in the novel, Robin Goodman is still 'she'. Smith still choses to define her ambiguous character by referring to the gender binary; the "whole other spectrum of colours" thus becomes collapsed into the single simplified spectrum of masculinity-ambiguity-femininity. Robin is nevertheless bound by the strictures of an unshakeable gender binary that, despite evidence to the contrary, firmly dictates that anyone who exists in society must always occupy one gender or the other.

In *Epidemics*, the ancient Greek 'father' of medicine Hippocrates tells the story of two people who find themselves in a similar position. Phaethousa and Nanno are both assigned female at birth, but later in life their bodies spontaneously start to be 'masculinised'. They reach a mid-point, neither masculine nor feminine, male nor female, and are subsequently subjected to the controlling powers of physicians who attempt to reverse these changes. In theory, much like Robin, they could find solace on the "whole other spectrum of colours"; however, just like their modern counterpart, Phaethousa's and Nanno's ambiguity is underscored by their unshakeable designation as 'women'. Because they exist in an ambiguous state, impossible to define using our simplistic binary terms, language itself also controls and limits not only how we describe them but also our capacity to imagine the endless variability of gender. In the Hippocratic story,

[1] Smith 2007, 83–84.

ambiguity becomes not a fascinating area that explores the rigidness of gender norms (as Robin's character does), but an unstable force that must be controlled and removed.

1. HIPPOCRATES

1.1 *EPIDEMICS*: PHAETHOUSA AND NANNO

Hippocrates of Kos was a prominent ancient Greek physician active during the fifth century BCE, under whose name numerous medical writings have been collected in the *Hippocratic Corpus*. However, we cannot be sure that he wrote all or indeed any treatises in the collection, (hence I refer to the 'Hippocratic author' not 'Hippocrates'). Therefore scholars since antiquity have typically attributed Hippocratic texts to either Hippocrates' own medical school on Kos, or the neighbouring school on the island of Knidos.[2] Although the seven books of *Epidemics* are usually attributed to the Koan school, Wesley Smith argues that this practice is based purely on an "unreliable tradition", and not on any concrete evidence.[3] The authorship of *Epidemics* thus remains a mystery. Additionally, the treatise is dated somewhere between the late fifth and early third centuries BCE, based on two factors: the approximate date of Book 1, and the highly similar viewpoints and assumptions shared across all seven books.[4] Therefore *Epidemics* itself becomes relatively ambiguous, with only an approximate date and an unknown author.

The case of Phaethousa and Nanno appears in Book 6 of *Epidemics*, which is a collection of physicians' notes primarily concerned with body organisation and the communication systems between different parts of the body.[5] It is fitting, therefore, that an example of physical ambiguity is recorded here, because such an event thoroughly complicates how the body is organised on both an individual and societal level. This relatively short account states that:

> Ἐν Ἀβδήροις Φαέθουσα ἡ Πυθέου γυνὴ οἰκουρὸς, ἐπίτοκος ἐοῦσα τοῦ ἔμπροσθεν χρόνου, τοῦ δὲ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς φυγόντος, τὰ γυναικεῖα ἀπελήφθη χρόνον πουλύν· μετὰ δὲ, ἐς ἄρθρα πόνοι καὶ ἐρυθήματα·

[2] Jouanna 1999, 58–70; Phillips 1973, 28–37.
[3] Smith 1994, 10.
[4] Smith 1994, 1, 10.
[5] Book 6 was likely made in preparation for revising Books 1 and 3, the most cohesive and well-known books of *Epidemics*. Books 1 and 3 deal with descriptions of the weather and the diseases they cause (called *catastases*); Books 5 and 7 are collections of case histories. See Smith 1994, 1–2, 6–10.

τούτων δὲ ξυμβάντων, τό τε σῶμα ἠνδρώθη, καὶ ἐδασύνθη πάντα, καὶ πώγωνα ἔφυσε, καὶ φωνὴ τρηχέη ἐγενήθη, καὶ πάντα πραγματευσαμένων ἡμῶν ὅσα ἦν πρὸς τὸ τὰ γυναικεῖα κατασπάσαι, οὐκ ἤλθεν, ἀλλ' ἀπέθανεν, οὐ πουλὺν μετέπειτα χρόνον βιώσασα. Ξυνέβη δὲ καὶ Ναννοῖ τῇ Γοργίππου γυναικὶ ἐν Θάσῳ τωὐτό· ἐδόκει δὲ πᾶσι τοῖσιν ἰητροῖσιν, οἷσι κἀγὼ ἐνέτυχον, μία ἐλπὶς εἶναι τοῦ γυναικωθῆναι, εἰ τὰ κατὰ φύσιν ἔλθοι· ἀλλὰ καὶ ταύτῃ οὐκ ἠδυνήθη, πάντα ποιούντων, ἐπελθεῖν, ἀλλ' ἐτελεύτησεν οὐ βραδέως.

In Abdera, Phaethousa the wife of Pytheas and mistress of the house, having already borne her children and after her husband fled (φυγόντος), stopped menstruating (τὰ γυναικεῖα ἀπελήφθη) for a long time. After that, she experienced pain and inflammation in her joints. When all that had happened, her body became masculinised (ἠνδρώθη): she grew hair all over, grew a beard, her voice became rough, and although we tried everything to restart her menstrual cycle, it did not come, and Phaethousa died shortly after. The same thing happened to Nanno the wife of Gorgippos, in Thasos. It seemed to all the physicians who I met, that there was one hope of feminising (γυναικωθῆναι) her, if her menses would return (εἰ τὰ κατὰ φύσιν ἔλθοι). But in her case also (ἀλλὰ καὶ ταύτῃ οὐκ ἠδυνήθη), it was not possible, and having tried everything, she died quickly (6.8.32).[6]

In both cases, ambiguity comes to dominate a previously clear situation; Phaethousa and Nanno were considered by all accounts to be female, existing in a stable state until a natural, spontaneous change pushed their physical bodies into instability and ambiguity, not quite female and not quite male.

[6] Greek text from Smith 1994. All translations are my own unless specified otherwise.

2. Liminal Beings

2.1. The Language of Ambiguity

How can the Hippocratic author attempt to describe the changes Phaethousa and Nanno undergo, this strange and spontaneous natural change into ambiguity that seems to have no cure and no precedent worth mentioning? The ancient Greeks did have specific words that could denote gender ambiguity, including 'ἀνδρόγυνος' (*androgynos*) or 'ἑρμαφρόδιτος' (*hermaphroditos*); however, neither of these words was regularly used to describe a person assigned female at birth, and this is reflected in their translations. *Androgynos* is translated as "a man-woman, hermaphrodite [intersex person], womanish man, or effeminate person" and is only used once in the *Hippocratic Corpus*.[7] Conversely, *hermaphroditos* is only used twice prior to the third century BCE (the period *Epidemics* was written) to refer to an effeminate man and also the intersex deity Hermaphroditos.[8] Therefore, although certain words did exist to describe situations of ambiguous gender, they do not appear to have been suitable or even applicable options. How then can he describe the changes Phaethousa and Nanno undergo?

Phaethousa, for instance, quite literally begins to lose her femininity. The Hippocratic author states that "τὰ γυναικεῖα ἀπελήφθη" (her menses were taken away).[9] He chooses the term 'τὰ γυναικεῖα' (*ta gynaikeia*) to describe menstruation, which comes from the adjective 'γυναικεῖος' (*gynaikeios*), meaning "feminine, belonging to women, womanly, effeminate."[10] It has a wide variety of applications to denote any aspect or feature perceived to be feminine in any way; used substantively, as in *Epidemics* 6.8.32, it can refer to menstruation. As Lesley Dean-Jones notes, menstruation was an experience considered so inextricable from womanhood in ancient Greece that sixth/fifth century BCE Pre-Socratic philosophers, as well as Hippocratic authors and Aristotle, used it as evidence of women's supposed inferiority to men.[11] Helen King notes that the Hippocratic author had another option, one that she

[7] *LSJ Online* 'ἀνδρόγυνος', ἑρμαφρόδιτος'. In *Regimen*, the author designates three possible types of men resulting from the combination of different types of parental seed during conception: 1) a man of the highest degree, strong in body and soul, 2) a brave man with a combination of weaker and stronger elements, or 3) an *androgynos*, the lowest type of man (Hp. *Vict.* (*Regimen*) 1.28).

[8] Hesiod (fr. 194; eighth/seventh century BCE) states that Pleisthenes, husband of Aerope, was either a *hermaphroditos* or crippled; Clearchus (fr. 86; fourth/third century BCE) refers to Hermaphroditos.

[9] In the passive, the verb 'ἀπελήφθη' (*apelēphthē*) usually means 'to be cut off/intercepted', and does not appear to have any particular connotation of violent removal. Instead, it suggests that this was done (or happened) to Phaethousa and that she had no control over the situation. See *LSJ Online* 'ἀπολαμβάνω'.

[10] *LSJ Online* 'γυναικεῖος'.

[11] Dean-Jones 2003, 187–189; Jones 1987, 61–62, 72–73.

specifically identifies as the more common term: 'τὰ καταμήνια' (*ta katamēnia*; the monthlies), which would stress the regularity of menstruation.[12] In the *Hippocratic Corpus*, *ta katamēnia* is used 112 times to refer to menstruation, and *ta gynaikeia* only slightly less at 78 times; but in *Epidemics* itself, *ta gynaikeia* is just as common as *ta katamēnia*. The very regular use of *ta gynaikeia*, especially in *Epidemics*, would therefore suggest that the words were largely interchangeable, particularly in Hippocratic texts. However, there is perhaps greater significance in the Hippocratic author's word choice. In a text that highlights menstruation becoming irregular and eventually ceasing, the author chooses not to place emphasis on this by using *ta katamēnia*. Instead, he draws on the inextricable link between menstruation and femaleness to emphasise that, with her menses ended, Phaethousa is losing her femininity. Similarly, in the case of Nanno, the author states that the return of her menstruation, described with the phrase "τὰ κατὰ φύσιν" ('*ta kata phusin*'; the things [that happen] according to nature), is the only hope she has of being 'cured' by being 'feminised' (γυναικωθῆναι*;* *gynaikōthēnai*). This word derives from the same roots as *ta gynaikeia*, and as a result, the author clearly draws a link between femininity and regular menstruation as 'natural' collaborators in a healthy female body. Any references to menstruation, therefore, emphasise not only that Phaethousa and Nanno are ill, but that they are losing their femininity.

Alongside her *ta gynaikeia*, one of the first things Phaethousa loses is her husband. The author is distinctly vague, and we are only told that Phaethousa's husband is "φυγόντος" (*fugontos*; fled, escaped, left, exiled, or been made a fugitive).[13] Whether he was exiled, escaping some unsavoury or possibly dangerous situation, or even perhaps fleeing Phaethousa herself is not clarified, and it is therefore impossible to speculate if his situation had any bearing on her subsequent illness. Given that the Hippocratic author does not elaborate and never mentions the husband again, it is perhaps not so much the circumstances around his absence, but the occurrence itself that is significant. As Ann Ellis Hanson notes, sexual intercourse with the husband is a common cure for many women's diseases in the *Hippocratic Corpus*, including instances where menstruation has ceased.[14] Even the ancient Greek language itself suggests the perceived importance of a husband. The word 'γυνή' (*gyne*) means both 'woman' and 'wife';

[12] King 2013, 137–138. Jones 1987, 105 identifies the Greek and Latin words for menstruation as *ta katamēnia* (not *ta gynaikeia*) and *menses*, which indicate that both cultures expected a regular monthly flow.
[13] Some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century CE commentators argued that her "masculinisation" was triggered by a longing for her absent husband. See King 2013, 129–130; King 2016, 98–102.
[14] Hanson 1990, 318–320 See also Jones 1987, 78–79; King 2016, 95.

the concept of 'woman' is thus inextricably linked to marriage.[15] The absence of Phaethousa's husband thus symbolises another important loss of femininity, a fundamental marker of Phaethousa's distinction as a *gyne*. From the physicians' perspective, she also loses any chance of fully regaining her femininity once again.

Filling the gap left by these losses in femininity, Phaethousa also gains aspects of 'masculinity'. The Hippocratic author states that Phaethousa's "τό τε σῶμα ἠνδρώθη" (body was masculinised), using 'ἠνδρώθη' (*ēndrōthē*) the conjugated form of the verb 'ἀνδρόω' (*androō*). Deriving from 'ἀνήρ' (*aner*) – 'ἀνδρός' (*andros*) in the genitive – the ancient Greek word for 'man', *androō* means "to become a man, reach manhood".[16] It is most commonly used to describe puberty, the transition from boy to man that results in one acquiring physical features traditionally considered masculine: growing a beard and body hair, and voice deepening;[17] all these things happen to Phaethousa as well, and thus *androō* would seem to be a particularly suitable word. Interestingly, as Helen King notes, the sixteenth-century medical humanist Mercurialis examined two other uses of *androō* in the Hippocratic text *On Joints*. In both instances, the word is used to generally refer to humans who have reached adulthood: "οἱ οὖν τοιοῦτοι ὁκόταν ἀνδρωθῶσι" (Such patients, then, when they become adults) and "Ὁπόσοισι μὲν οὖν ἂν ἤδη ἠνδρωμένοισι " (those already adult[s]).[18] For Mercurialis, these two uses of *androō* do not reference a gender change, but rather the existence of a matured (i.e. post-pubertal) body, and he therefore uses these two examples to deny that Phaethousa and Nanno experienced any change in their gender.[19] Yet *androō*'s main use was as a signifier of male puberty, and it does not inherently imply that a gender transition occurs, but rather a physiological process. What is significant, however, is that in all extant Greek literature prior to the turn of the millennium, the word is not used to refer specifically to people assigned female at birth, except in the story of Phaethousa and Nanno.[20] As a result, the masculinisation

[15] See *LSJ Online* 'γυνή'.
[16] *LSJ Online* 'ἀνδρός'. The first definition of the word given is "change into a man" based on *Lyc*. 176, who uses the word to describe a myth of ants changing into men.
[17] See Chapter 1, 9 and n.16.
[18] Hp. *Art*. 58, 60. Translation from Withington 1928, 58 = p.341, 60 = p. 343.
[19] King 2016, 116–117.
[20] Apart from *Epidemics*, only two other uses (out of 56 in total for this period) refer to people assigned female at birth: the Hippocratic text (*Girls*, 1) speaks about married women i.e. women who are "manned up"; and in fragment 287, Kratinos (fifth/fourth century BCE comic playwright) refers to a child in the feminine form (ἡ παῖς; *he pais*) who has reached puberty. It is a short fragment and impossible to establish the context.

process Phaethousa and Nanno undergo is marked as unusual, demonstrated by the unfamiliar application of this word.

Even more interesting, the author specifies that it was Phaethousa's body (σῶμα*; sōma*) that was masculinised. *Sōma* used directly in conjunction with *androō* carries significant ideological weight because, for an ancient Greek boy experiencing puberty, the change is not only physical but also social. With a growing beard comes a higher social standing, the ability to participate in government, to fight in wars, and to own property. Phaethousa and Nanno experience no such social change. Indeed, as Holmes notes, when traditionally 'male' bodily features, which are implicitly linked to male social privileges, appear on a person assigned female at birth, they become pathological signs.[21] Phaethousa's and Nanno's transformations are thus purely physical, deliberately presented as an unnatural change rendering them diseased women, rather than powerful examples of social and physical fluidity.

Ideally, Phaethousa and Nanno should occupy an intermediate place in society, considered neither male nor female, their ambiguity acknowledged. However, the Hippocratic author implicitly and explicitly presents a firm and unwavering view of Phaethousa and Nanno as incontestably women. This is reinforced by his continued use of feminine word forms to refer to them, even after their transformations. He states that Phaethousa "οὐ πουλὺν μετέπειτα χρόνον βιώσασα" (did not live much longer), using the participle 'βιώσασα' (*biōsasa*) in the feminine form, clearly indicating that Phaethousa is perceived by both the physicians and the author himself as a woman even beyond her death.[22] Similarly, in the case of Nanno, the author recounts the physicians' failure to 'feminise' her, stating that "ἀλλὰ καὶ ταύτῃ οὐκ ἠδυνήθη" (in her case too, it was not possible). He uses the demonstrative pronoun in the feminine form 'ταύτῃ' (*tautēi*) to refer to Nanno posthumously. It is clear, therefore, that the author still considered Phaethousa and Nanno women, despite the physiological changes.

King develops this concept even further, highlighting the author's use of the words 'οἰκουρός' (*oikouros*) and 'ἐπίτοκος' (*epitokos*). After stringent linguistic analyses, she translates them as "a good stay-at-home wife" and a woman who is "always pregnant" and regularly giving

[21] Holmes 2012, 15.
[22] See also Holmes 2012, 15.

birth.[23] King argues that the author's word choice thus emphasises Phaethousa's extremely feminine behaviour; she is devoted to her female duties in the household (*oikouros*), and is considerably fertile with a highly-functioning womb (*epitokos*).[24] King thus concludes that, in an ancient Greek world theorised by scholars like Thomas Laqueur to be full of gender fluidity, Phaethousa "stands out as an example of the way in which [Hippocratic writers] instead mix biology and culture, and regard [gender] difference, rather than fluidity, as key."[25] However, although King does not state it, the author's focus on femininity allows him to strongly establish what he confirms throughout: their *ta gynaikeia* might be gone and their bodies masculinised, but they could never actually be anything other than women. And this answers the question I posed at the beginning of this section: why does the author not use any of the existing ancient Greek words that describe physical ambiguity? The answer lies not only in the fact that these were terms reserved for people assigned male at birth, but also in the fact that, in his eyes, Phaethousa and Nanno were never ambiguous; they were diseased women suffering an unnatural illness. Their ambiguous bodies cannot be returned to a state of perceived stability again, and as a result, they die.

2.2. Submission and Control

Everything in the author's description of Phaethousa and Nanno – their implicit unnaturalness, their loss of femininity and gain of masculinity, their retained distinction as women – displays his profound discomfort with physical ambiguity, which is further echoed by the actions of the physicians. When Phaethousa's and Nanno's bodies change, the physicians attempt to re-establish clarity, because in their eyes, the bodies of the two have moved out of a culturally-constructed notion of what is acceptably 'female'. For the physicians, this is a frightening and unexpected reality; they respond by attempting to regain mastery and control over the unruly bodies. Operating within culturally-normative ideas of what a man or woman must be, they are at liberty to make subjective decisions on a patient's gender, thus dictating and reinforcing the boundaries of 'male' and 'female'. For instance, Diodorus Siculus describes the story of Kallon (discussed at length in Chapter 3), who experiences similar changes to Phaethousa and Nanno. Kallon is assigned female at birth, but later develops a painful tumour around his genitals

[23] King 2013, 137, 139.
[24] King 2013, 137–140; King 2016, 107–111.
[25] King 2013, 140.

that, when bisected, reveals testes and an imperforate penis (one in which the urethra does not run through). He then undergoes extensive surgery to bring his genitals in line with cultural perceptions of 'correctness'. In contrast to Kallon – whose 'masculinisation' was accepted – the physicians conclude that Phaethousa and Nanno are still women, albeit suffering a mysterious illness, and therefore any treatment must return them to a female state. Thus, they are forced to submit to 'feminising' treatment (which is never fully outlined), their bodies dominated by cultural norms and medical authorities. Even the fact that they die illustrates that not only is ambiguity seen as an 'illness', but also as a transient, rather than final, state. For these authors, ambiguity must be resolved, and if a body cannot be forced to conform to a particular gender, it cannot (or should not) survive. In each case, the power rests with the physician in question to remove ambiguity, either surgically in Kallon's case, or in failed attempts at healing in Phaethousa's and Nanno's.

Not only are cultural norms directly imposed on the bodies of Phaethousa and Nanno, there is also no indication that their opinion is considered or that they have any input in the doctor's processes. Ann Ellis Hanson and Lesley Dean-Jones both note that, in classical Greece, women were far more likely to seek medical assistance from local wise-women and midwives, and doctors were only brought in to examine and treat female patients in dire situations.[26] Indeed, the presence of the physicians in the story is perhaps useful shorthand, emphasising the author's serious concern surrounding these changes into physical ambiguity. Moreover, Holmes notes that a physician in the classical period carried considerable authority because, through his training, he can claim to understand body processes. She states that:

> These processes are imagined to be internal to the nature of the *sōma*; [medical skill] enables the physician to manipulate them intentionally. The key term here is 'intentionally,' which signals the presence of an agent whose intelligence is in some sense discontinuous with both the *sōma*'s vital forces and the death drive of the disease. […] In fact, in the classical period, the physician seems to represent a kind of idealized intelligent agency.[27]

As she points out, agency – specifically control over treatment, diagnosis, healing, and even death – lies with the physician rather than with the patient. As a result, Phaethousa and Nanno lose autonomy over their own bodies once the physician is called in, their voices subsumed by

[26] Dean-Jones 1994, 31–36; Hanson 1990, 309.
[27] Holmes 2010, 25.

the authority claimed by their doctors. We cannot know what Phaethousa and Nanno thought, how they felt, their sufferings, or their opinions, and they thus become silent, passive victims to the violence of cultural gender normativity.

This is perhaps unsurprising. *Epidemics*, like the majority of works in this period, was written with the authoritative tone of an upper-class male physician, producing a text for other medical practitioners. It was important to report the case, not the patient's opinion or experience. Interestingly, King speculates that the story of Phaethousa and Nanno was unlikely to have been a first-hand account. Comparing other case studies in *Epidemics*, she highlights the author's lack of singular first person wording (the author only uses first person plurals, stating 'we did' rather than 'I did'), the lack of verbs suggesting direct contact with the patient, and the absence of any direct reporting of the patient's own words. King thus concludes that the account was merely an anecdote reported to the author, which he decided to include to warn his readers of an extremely rare illness that could potentially occur again.[28] This is highly significant. Phaethousa's and Nanno's voices become even more doctored and distilled by an author without first-hand experience of their cases. He is able to dictate what is or is not significant enough to be included in the text, and thus he controls how Phaethousa and Nanno, and their genders, are perceived throughout. His use of language designates them as diseased women, and divests them of agency over their own tale, not only removing their power to comment on their own treatments, but also denying them a voice in preserving their story for the future.

2.3. Regaining Agency: Reading Between the Lines

The physicians and the author make desperate attempts to regain control over Phaethousa and Nanno by stripping them of agency and claiming superior authority. As Holmes notes, physicians built their skill on the assumption that the body was something that could be understood and mastered. However, they also acknowledged that "physical bodies are spaces of multiple possibilities that exceed what medicine can map. The *sōma* is, then, not simply an object of rational control but also something that evades control."[29] Phaethousa's and Nanno's bodies do just that. They are depicted as beyond human help, and with their deaths, the author

[28] King 2013, 128; King 2016, 93.
[29] Holmes 2010, 26.

is able to reinforce a physician's cultural authority over matters of the body. If the physicians are unable to remove gender ambiguity, nature itself steps in and re-affirms their initial diagnosis: unruly bodies do not survive and gender ambiguity is a transient, not a final, state. However, Phaethousa's and Nanno's ambiguous bodies are not in a transient state. They experience the initial change without any input from physicians; their menses simply stop, their bodies pushed into ambiguity by some unnamed, natural force, and they resist any attempts at human intervention.

John Winkler states that when we read between the lines of ancient Greek texts written by and for elite men, we can find "hesitations, refusals to speak, backtracking", and consequently discover a plurality of practices, norms, and meanings.[30] Reading between the lines of this text, we find it is not Phaethousa and Nanno who lose agency, but the physicians themselves. Phaethousa's and Nanno's bodies defy any further changes – all their changes are naturally, rather than humanly, imposed – and their bodies utterly confound the physicians. Their reactions are telling of their frustrations: "πάντα προαγματευσαμένων" (we tried everything); "μία ἐλπὶς εἶναι" (there was [only] one hope); "πάντα ποιούντων" (having tried everything). Likely these words do illustrate the frustration and legitimate desperation of physicians who are attempting to help a patient; however, they also suggest their frustration at their lack of power and inability to control the 'unruly bodies'. They are unable to be altered by any human means, and even after their deaths, their bodies continue to interest and confound scholars, providing no answers and allowing only speculation on their circumstances. Phaethousa's and Nanno's eternally ambiguous bodies thus turn the tables, taking power and agency away from the physicians who would seek to control them. They may be Hippocrates' 'women', but simultaneously they complicate this simplistic classification.

3. QUEERING *EPIDEMICS*

3.1. LANGUAGE AND TIME: ANCIENT AND MODERN

Phaethousa and Nanno regularly reappear in history to both support and challenge ideas about 'unnatural' gender ambiguity, bridging ancient and modern worlds. However, the Hippocratic author's simplistic classification of them as diseased women has persisted. For example, the

[30] Winkler 1990, 204.

sixteenth-century medical humanist Mercuralis not only emphatically retained the Hippocratic author's view of Phaethousa and Nanno as diseased women, but also consistently denied that they could ever 'become' men, thus refusing to acknowledge any ambiguity in their genders.[31] Moreover, the Hippocratic author's choice to avoid established words that describe gender ambiguity, such as *hermaphroditos* or *androgynos*, continued in later commentaries. King notes that several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century commentators and medical historians including Luis Mercardo, Jacques Farrand, and Jacques Guillemeau argued that Phaethousa was merely a woman suffering from a prolapsed womb and in no way was a 'true hermaphrodite'.[32] Unlike a 'male hermaphrodite' or a 'female hermaphrodite' (who were both usually fertile, but had non-normalised genitalia), a 'true hermaphrodite' had both 'male' and 'female' genitals at the same time. [33] They would thus resemble the ancient intersex deity Hermaphroditos, who was born with a combination of traditionally 'male' and 'female' genitalia, and was regularly depicted in art as a figure with breasts, a penis, and testes.[34] The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century concept of a 'true hermaphrodite' was thus borrowed directly from the ancient world, and various commentators used an ancient example of physical gender ambiguity, Phaethousa and Nanno, to reinforce their own contemporary theories on 'true hermaphroditism'. Like the Hippocratic author, these commentators preferred to think of Phaethousa and Nanno as diseased women, and just like their ancient counterpart, they avoided the use of established terms for physical ambiguity. Moreover, by alluding back to ancient precedents, these commentators thus brought Phaethousa and Nanno into their contemporary world by 're-diagnosing' them.

James Young Simpson took this position even further in 1839; not only does he bridge ancient and modern worlds, but he also ventures into the realms of anachronism. For him, Phaethousa did not 'become' a man, and was not a 'true hermaphrodite', but also did not remain a 'normal' woman. Instead, she became a *virago*, a type of ancient Roman woman who exhibited a more 'masculine' character; however, Simpson expands on this, defining a *virago* as a woman who was past child-bearing age, whose ovaries no longer functioned, and whose body therefore became more masculine – something that was often accompanied with a more masculine

[31] King 2013, 132; King 2016, 117–119. A few commentators believed Phaethousa experienced a full gender transition. See Holmes 2012, 196; King 2016, 83–84, 117–119.
[32] King 2013, 128–130. 'Hermaphrodite' is a now-outdated term for an intersex person. See Chapter 1, 18.
[33] King 2013, 129; King 2016, 82–83.
[34] See Diod. Sic. 4.6.5; Delcourt 1961, 43–66; Holmes 2012, 76–79; *LIMC* 'Hermaphroditos'. In Ovid (*Met*. 4. 274–388), Hermaphroditos was an adolescent boy whose body was merged with the nymph Salmacis.

temperament.[35] Like other commentators before him, Simpson's analysis combines ancient and modern elements; for instance, ovaries were unknown in Hippocrates' time, but Simpson utilised modern ideas about them in his analysis. Although dismissing 'true hermaphroditism', a concept with roots in both antiquity and later periods, he nevertheless identified the ancient Greek Phaethousa and Nanno with an ancient Roman concept. The *virago* would have been unfamiliar to Hippocratic writers, and Simpson's analysis becomes thus anachronistic. He overlooks traditional historicist modes of inquiry, which are based on a system of periodisation and alterity; the past is different to the present and needs to be bound to its specific temporal and historical context.[36] Even though Simpson was writing a medical text – thus not necessarily required to observe the traditional historicism that frowns upon anachronism – his disregard for historical periodisation is nevertheless fascinating because his analysis pushes Phaethousa and Nanno outside linear time into an almost timeless word.

Conversely, King relies on historicist analysis to inform her reading of the text. In her linguistic exploration of the words *oikouros* and *epitokos*, she concludes that Phaethousa is presented as highly feminine and particularly womanly, drawing upon textual evidence from other Hippocratic authors, and the second-century CE medical writer Galen. She also examines translations of the text in English and French, thus bridging not only various time periods, but also several language barriers in her analysis.[37] Yet elsewhere she shies away from 'textbook' anachronism, when she briefly discusses Phaethousa and Nanno in the context of nineteenth-century 'freak shows' that often exhibited 'bearded ladies'.[38] Increasing unease about the rise in women's rights movements of the nineteenth century occurred alongside an increasing fascination with bearded ladies; for King, calling Phaethousa and Nanno bearded ladies lays inappropriate emphasis on them as "some physically repulsive proto-feminist[s]" rather than the author's original portrayal of them as paragons of feminine virtue.[39] She feels that examining Phaethousa and Nanno in the context of nineteenth-century bearded ladies would bring in an unhelpful "set of assumptions that had no place in ancient Greece."[40] However, King dismisses this "set of assumptions" based purely on the argument of faithfulness to

[35] King 2013, 134–135. *Virago* had positive connotations, and could be used to refer to a woman (including a goddess) who was physically strong, or even warlike or heroic. See *OLD* '*virago*'.
[36] See Chapter 1, 15–16; Bevir 2011, 24; Jardine 2000, 251.
[37] King 2013, 137–139.
[38] By textbook anachronism, I mean using terms or concepts that are perceived by traditional history to be completely alien to the period in question. See Jardine 2000, 252–253. King also briefly compares ancient Roman 'monster markets' with nineteenth century 'freak shows'. See King 2016, 81
[39] King 2013, 135–137.
[40] King 2013, 136.

historical periodisation ("they had no place in ancient Greece"), abandoning this form of anachronistic disloyalty to linear history in favour of another. Modern translations of *Epidemics*, as well as Galen's texts and commentaries are chronologically and culturally distant from Hippocrates' time – consider the fact that Galen knew about ovaries but Hippocratic physicians did not – and these works would also bring with them an anachronistic set of assumptions. Neither is inherently more helpful or less anachronistic than the other simply because traditional history would view, for instance, a nineteenth-century translation of *Epidemics* as more-or-less belonging to Hippocrates' world, whereas nineteenth-century bearded ladies would be seen as completely unrelated entities.

Moreover, rejecting the anachronistic concept of bearded ladies as 'unhelpful' also dismisses the *helpful* assumptions and comparisons this could bring. Bearded ladies were exhibited as cultural curiosities. They were caught in-between two polar opposites (male and female), denied conventional femininity because of their beard, but simultaneously denied the chance to occupy the male world. Phaethousa and Nanno are also caught in the middle, removed from masculinity because the author goes to great lengths to over-emphasise their femininity. Phaethousa and Nanno thus become medical curiosities, arousing a similar wonder and fear that attendees of nineteenth-century shows experienced. Indeed, they are constantly treated as medical oddities that need explaining, scattered across various scientific texts throughout history. Phaethousa and Nanno thus became exhibits much like the bearded ladies themselves, their ambiguous bodies pulled out for display in text after text.

These various receptions of Phaethousa and Nanno thus blur historical distinctions, filled with a varied mixture of features belonging to different time periods, and a vagueness that suits their equally vague story. They become less anachronistic, but rather *achronistic*, existing in the 'grey area', the gaps that exist between distinct binary genders and linearly-defined time periods. It is by probing these gaps and thinking unhistorically that they seem to come to life; the short and concise text becomes vibrant and lively. They begin to break down barriers between previously stable cultural constructs like time and gender. Queer Unhistoricism turns the 'rules' of history on their head by encouraging the use of anachronism, yet by doing so it also allows us to question whether history has ever truly been devoid of it. Calling Phaethousa and Nanno both 'women' was necessitated by the limitations of English (and Greek); however, their transformations thoroughly complicate the idea of a gender binary split into male and female. Importantly, words like 'male', 'female', 'man', 'woman', 'masculine', and 'feminine'

are all taken for granted, practically considered ahistorical concepts. However, they are in fact culturally-locked, with vastly different meanings in different time periods. What do these terms refer to today? A person's gender identity? Their gender assigned at birth? The physical make-up of their bodies? Their gender expression? An ancient Greek person would not necessarily be asking exactly the same questions, and they certainly would not get the same answers. Yet we nevertheless apply these terms, which can have such varied meanings to us compared to the ancient Greeks, to the ancient world without question.

This is the same issue that many queer historians have encountered when attempting to refute the 'straight until proven otherwise' view of history – the traditional presumption that all great figures in the past only practiced opposite-gender attraction and love. Arising out of historicist and altericist thinking, this view denies the existence of historical same-gender attraction because words like 'homosexual' or 'same-gender love' and their associated concepts would have had different meanings (or be completely anachronistic) in historical periods.[41] Yet, despite any evidence to the contrary, traditional history will always assume that people in the past practiced opposite-gender love, without acknowledging that 'opposite-gender' would also have been viewed differently in the past.[42] Thus with both sexuality and gender, scholars predominantly assume that historical societies conform to modern norms, and that these norms are transhistorical. Why can we not flip this script? In particular, if we can apply words like 'woman/man', 'male/female', and 'masculine/feminine' practically without question to the ancient world, why not 'intersex', 'transgender', or 'non-binary'?[43] Both groups of words would be anachronistic and so to argue 'woman' is acceptable, but 'intersex' is not on the basis of historical (and historicist) context, only serves to further support an agenda that denies the historical existence of queer people, simply because they are seen as some kind of 'new' concept. Moreover, by flipping this script, we can challenge persistent notions that history presents some kind of stable, factual 'truth' about the world.

[41] See Dinshaw et al. 2007, 185–186; Goldberg and Menon 2005, 1611–1612; Halperin 1990, 24–36; Matzner 2016, 191.

[42] For example, the Renaissance artist Michelangelo wrote explicitly homoerotic poetry (that was even altered by his grand-nephew). However, his sexuality is often a topic for debate, with commentators preferring to label him a chaste, non-sexual person, rather than bring his same-gender desire into the equation. See Norton 1997, 143; Saslow 1988, 77.

[43] Interestingly, these words retain a connection to the ancient world: 'intersex' combines the Latin words '*inter*' and '*sexus*' ('between sexes'); 'transgender' is formed from Latin '*trans*' (across), and 'gender', itself derived from ancient Greek 'γένος' (*genos*; type, kind, group, kin) and Latinised by the Romans as '*genus*'; non-binary comes from the Latin '*bis*' (double, two).

3.4. QUEER TIME IN *EPIDEMICS*

Phaethousa and Nanno begin to break down barriers between previously stable cultural constructs such as time and gender, and instead move on to fully inhabit the 'grey area'. They thus live in Queer Time, in a non-linear, fluid, and multidimensional space that allows us to examine their story as a timeless tale that constantly probes the grey area of gender. We can also evaluate their experiences outside of their historical context.[44] By suspending chronological difference – as queer unhistoricists such as Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon advocate – between the ancient and modern world and detaching them from linear time, inherent similarities to the modern trans or intersex experience are thrown into sharp relief. Just like their modern queer counterparts, Phaethousa and Nanno do not experience time in normalised, linear ways.

For instance, the physiological changes Phaethousa and Nanno experience – cessation of their menstruation, their body hair and beard growth, and deepening voices – resonate with those of a modern trans man or transmasculine individual undertaking hormone replacement therapy. Trans people often refer to this period of time as their 'second' or 'correct' puberty, because it is a series of processes that enables their physical expression to match more closely their internal sense of gender. In this context, the term *androō*, which initially was particularly conspicuous, becomes remarkably appropriate: Phaethousa and Nanno are literally undergoing a puberty process. Applying 'trans' gives a whole new meaning to the author's word choice and, instead of marking out Phaethousa's and Nanno's transformations as something immediately unfamiliar and unnatural, in fact repositions our thinking, allowing us to fully appreciate the chronological implications of the term. In this context, *androō* does not signify an unnatural change, but rather the repetition of a natural one. For Phaethousa and Nanno, time jumps back (a second puberty), but also progresses forwards (a pre-pubescent body developing into an adolescent one) at the same time. Furthermore, the author never specifies how old Phaethousa and Nanno are, and King argues that there is no evidence to suggest they are post-menopausal.[45] Thus, they die outside normative expectations of a person's age at death, and perhaps too soon given the sudden nature of their deaths. Moreover, the author states that Phaethousa "ἐπίτοκος ἐοῦσα τοῦ ἔμπροσθεν χρόνου" (had already borne her children) before her death. Marriage and producing children were among the most important

[44] See Chapter 1, 17.
[45] King 2013, 134–135; King 2016, 78–80.

achievements in the life of an ancient Greek woman.[46] Because the author presents them as women without question, it is fascinating that they die after they had already given birth; Phaethousa and Nanno may have thus died too soon, but they nevertheless did not die with the social obligations associated with their assigned gender unfulfilled. However, their deaths also take place after their second puberties, and as a result, Phaethousa and Nanno die at simultaneously the right time (after a fulfilled life) and the wrong time (too soon, and as new adolescents after their second puberty). Their life experiences are thus ones of *trans*temporality, jumping across blocks of normative time – again the word 'trans' plays a significant role in depicting their experience of time as thoroughly queer and non-linear.

However, the term 'trans' also carries with it the idea of agency. Compared to Phaethousa and Nanno, who spontaneously experience their second puberty and have no control over the physicians' treatments, trans people in the modern world are thought have far more control over their transitions. This is true to a certain extent. The choice to go on hormones, undertake surgery, update legal documents, and socially transition is, in theory, up to the person in question. However, in many ways trans people are just as limited in their agency as Phaethousa and Nanno. In *Epidemics* 6, dominant authorities (the physicians and the author) are the ones who set and dictate the boundaries of 'male' and 'female', and who control treatment. This is just as true today. Governments and medical institutions have the power to dictate how and when a person can transition. Usually referred to as 'gate-keeping', legal authorities can set certain parameters for trans people to meet before they can update documents such as birth certificates, passports, and driver's licenses. These can include legal name changes, and proof that they have lived openly in their correct gender for a certain period of time; moreover, legal transition is often also subject to certain medical criteria, including proof of psychological treatment, hormone therapy, surgery, and even sterilisation.[47] Thus, even when they wish to (and are able to) pursue transition, their power to do so is directly policed by legal, medical, and social authorities that dictate how their bodies should look and behave. If they do not conform to all aspects of 'what makes a man' or 'what makes a woman', they can be demonised and considered 'ill'.

[46] Cf. Helen in the *Odyssey*, who is no longer able to have children, her punishment after her return from Troy (4.11–14); Aristotle draws a strong connection between femininity and fecundity (*GA* 746b21–747a4). See also Arist. *Pol.* 335a–b; Pl. *Laws*. 772d–773e; X. *Oec*. 7.12–30; Brulé 2003, 64, 139, 157–161; Dover 1974, 95–99; Hanson 1990, 318–320; Henderson 1988, 1252–1253; Kent 2006, 87.
[47] See also Chapter 3, 56–57.

Phaethousa and Nanno thus lack control over their physical changes, and are also perceived as 'unnatural' by the dominant social norms of their time. As well as those of trans individuals, Phaethousa and Nanno also closely reflect the experiences of intersex people, particularly those who are (most commonly) assigned female at birth, but experience physical changes (often at puberty) due to their own naturally high production of testosterone. Often called 'virilisation' by medical practitioners today, people with these types of intersex variations are regularly subjected to medical treatments and surgeries to bring their bodies in line with cultural perceptions of 'correctness'. Phaethousa and Nanno suffer similarly, with the physicians desperately trying to regain control of their bodies by reinstating their perception of what is 'normal' and subjecting them to 'feminising' treatments.[48] Silenced by the power and authority of the physicians, Phaethousa and Nanno have no autonomy over their own bodies.

Moreover, normative conceptions of time would dictate that gender assignment happens at birth, and does not need to be altered or medically maintained later in life. In this standardised, linear timeline, people are born, assigned a gender, and experience a puberty that follows that initial gender assignment; they do not need to have a puberty medically induced that will ensure their bodies conform to social norms of 'correct', binary gendered bodies. Thus, normalised ideas about gender and the body are linked to normative conceptions of linear time. But for intersex people, gender assignment can happen much later in life, or can exist in a state of limbo for many years, while they are subjected to intensive and invasive medical treatment to 'correct' their bodies. Intersex people thus challenge the idea that the link between linear time and binary gender must be 'normal'. After all, Phaethousa and Nanno experience a natural and spontaneous change in adulthood that challenges the stability of gender. Their example thus clearly demonstrates how deeply ingrained ideas about binary gender are in both ancient and modern societies. We are constantly limited and controlled by the strictures of gender dualism, which erases the existence (quite literally in the case of Phaethousa and Nanno) of the non-standard individual.

Phaethousa and Nanno also defy these norms. Their bodies resist any attempts to reverse the changes, and the efforts of the physicians to restore a sense of perceived stability end in failure. Gender is often considered a construct that human ability can control and, therefore, dominant authorities in the ancient and the modern worlds create medical and legal processes to deal with non-normalised bodies and genders. Ambiguity, conversely, is thought of as an unstable and

[48] See also Chapter 3, 41–52.

precarious state, artfully illustrated by several factors including: the physicians' desperate attempts to reverse Phaethousa's and Nanno's changes, the author's insistence on emphasising their femininity, and the various receptions of their story that firmly maintain a view of their ambiguity as merely an unnatural disease. However, in the story of Phaethousa and Nanno, ambiguity – this state that is perceived to be unstable and precarious – in fact becomes a stable state. The ambiguity of Phaethousa's and Nanno's bodies is unchanging, thus transcending cultural norms and leaving the gender binary destroyed in its wake.

In addition, ambiguity becomes a force more powerful than these culturally-enforced binary norms, clearly indicating the arbitrary nature of gender. Phaethousa's and Nanno's experience of gender is thus non-binary. They constantly exist in state that flows between 'man' or 'woman', impossible to fully define as one or the other. In Chapter 1, I mentioned how words like 'trans', 'intersex', and 'non-binary' in their very definitions, rely on the gender binary to be explained. However, a word such as 'non-binary' can also clearly demonstrate the incredible power of ambiguity. Non-binary is something defined by what it is not, defined by its non-conformity to conformity. It therefore perfectly illustrates the complex situation Phaethousa and Nanno continually exist in, and allows their bodies to not only maintain their incredible boundary-breaking power, but also speak for themselves as entities that are constantly liberated from and limited by the gender binary. I could therefore refer to them individually with the singular gender-neutral pronoun 'they'. Doing so, alongside calling them non-binary, allows Phaethousa and Nanno to exist in a stable state in which their ambiguity is constantly challenging the artificiality of cultural norms. They are able to exist inside and outside culture, inside and outside gender, inside and outside time.

4. Conclusion: The Grey Area Speaks up

I started this chapter by discussing Robin Goodman from Ali Smith's novel, the character who, like Phaethousa and Nanno, simultaneously defies gender norms and is forced to fit into them. For Smith, Robin lives inside a 'grey area', a powerful space of gender exploration. It is an incredibly vague term, matching the similarly vague story of Phaethousa and Nanno; indeed, the account of their transformations is intended as a quick examination of a strange natural shift into ambiguity that renders two people, consistently perceived to be female, as diseased women. Phaethousa and Nanno, on the surface, seem disempowered, but upon closer

examination we see that their bodies regain agency and power from those who would seek to control them. They remain eternally confusing to generations of commentators, refusing to be neatly categorised. The story of Phaethousa and Nanno also explores the power of language, both as a method of control (they are constantly called 'women') and as a method of resistance (this classification as 'women' is suspect). The grey area speaks up, taking back control from those who would seek to control and simplify it.

Through unhistoricist analysis and the use of anachronistic terms, the grey area can begin to be expanded, filled up with powerful new language; words like 'trans', 'intersex', and 'non-binary' are able to perfectly illustrate the complexities of Phaethousa's and Nanno's genders. They truly encompass the ambiguity of a grey area that is limited by and liberated from the gender binary, a grey area simultaneously reliant on and in defiance of cultural norms. Moreover, the use of the modern terms not only serves as a useful way of articulating complex ideas, but also highlights the non-linearity of Phaethousa's and Nanno's story, and thus emphasises the symbiotic relationship between gender and time. To exist in a grey area of gender, is to exist in a grey space of time; each informs the other. Language therefore has the power to highlight, reinforce, and challenge the binary, linear, constructed, and arbitrary nature of both time and gender. In the story of Phaethousa and Nanno, the ambiguity of their gender, the timelessness of their story, and the power of language to reclaim their agency all highlight how powerful and pervasive the grey area is. It is everywhere, naturally-occurring and limited only by our arbitrary cultural norms that dictate what 'normality' must be.

CHAPTER 3

DIODORUS: CHAOS AND ORDER

> Normality wasn't normal. It couldn't be. If normality were normal, everybody could leave it alone. They could sit back and let normality manifest itself. But people – especially doctors – had doubts about normality. They weren't sure normality was up to the job. And so they felt inclined to give it a boost.[1]

Cal, the main character of Jeffrey Eugenides' highly-acclaimed novel *Middlesex* (2002) makes an important observation on social norms: they are thoroughly constructed. People – especially those with an authoritative voice – feel inclined to dictate and uphold arbitrary norms about how everyone should look and act, in order to "give [normality] a boost". Cal has a complex relationship with the idea of normality. He was assigned female at birth, but in his mid-teens he discovered he had 5-alpha reductase deficiency, an intersex trait that affects the hormonal synthesis of androgens. His doctors wanted to surgically alter his genitals so that they fit socially-normative conceptions of 'female' genitalia. However, it is at this point in his life that he realises he does not identify as a woman. He refuses any surgeries and goes on to socially transition to male, but this is not merely a simple shift from femininity to masculinity. Cal "never felt out of place being a girl [but still doesn't] feel entirely at home among men."[2] Social normativity thus continues to govern him, and he can never quite fit into clearly defined cultural limits of 'normal'.

Similarly to Cal, Diophantos and Kallon in Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliotheca Historica* are also intersex; scholars have even demonstrated that they likely also had 5-alpha reductase deficiency.[3] They are assigned female at birth, but find their bodies spontaneously change later in life, with penises and testes rapidly revealed. Diodorus uses their tale to argue that gender ambiguity is simply a transient state, and that maleness and femaleness are entirely separate. Unlike Phaethousa and Nanno, liminal beings who defy simple categorisation and are firmly non-binary, Eugenides' Cal, and Diodorus' Diophantos and Kallon, are the opposite. Although all three experience subsequent ambiguity in their social and/or physical gender, they nevertheless are controlled by cultural norms that force them to conform to an 'intelligible' binary gender. Where Phaethousa and Nanno represent the stability of ambiguity – something

[1] Eugenides 2002, 446.
[2] Eugenides 2002, 479.
[3] See below, 46–47.

thought to be completely unstable – the stories of Diophantos and Kallon appear in stark contrast, seemingly tales of control, order, and the removal of ambiguity.

1. DIOPHANTOS AND KALLON

1.1. DIODORUS SICULUS' *BIBLIOTHECA HISTORICA*

Bibliotheca Historica was written from approximately 60–30 BCE by Diodorus Siculus, a Hellenistic Greek historian based in Sicily. Intended to be a universal history of the ancient Mediterranean, spanning from its mythological beginnings to Julius Caesar's first consulship in 59 BCE, only the first five books and Books 11–20 of the original 40 survive in full (although various fragments also survive). The story of Diophantos and Kallon in Book 32, for instance, is preserved in the works of Photius, the ninth-century CE Byzantine Patriarch of Constantinople.[4] Diodorus has long been considered a copyist, only valuable for preserving the now extinct voices of various philosophical and historical authors of the period. However, Kenneth Sacks disputes this, stating that Diodorus' originality lies in his purpose: to impress upon his readers the notion that history can be a useful and beneficial learning tool.[5]

Diodorus even clearly states that he included the cases of Diophantos (32.10) and Kallon (32.11), alongside other examples of ambiguous beings (32.12), "οὐ ψυχαγωγίας ἀλλ᾽ ὠφελείας ἕνεκα τῶν ἀναγινωσκόντων" (not for entertainment, but for the benefit of our readers; 32.12.1).[6] He tells these stories to dispel the superstitious fears that often lead to vigilante and state-sanctioned violence against people with ambiguous bodies, violence that Diodorus considers misplaced because these people "ὁμοίας κεκοινωνηκότα φύσεως" (share a common nature with us; 32.12.2). Diodorus is adamant that 'male' and 'female' are entirely separate categories, and therefore ambiguity is simply an illness, an 'error of nature' concealing a person's 'true' gender and creating a 'false' impression to mystify humanity.[7] As Rebecca Langlands states, for Diodorus any change in gender "is paradigmatic of the kind of

[4] Photius, *Bib.* 377–379 B; see also Walton 1957, vii–x; Goukowsky 2012, xlii–xliii.
[5] Sacks 1990, 23–33; Sacks 1994, 213–218; see also Armeni et al. 2014, 579–580. Diodorus was "not concerned with improving the general's strategic skills and the politician's powers of diplomacy. Rather, the historian encourages the noble deeds of all peoples through the emphasis on civic virtue". Sacks 1990, 25.
[6] Greek text from Walton 1957. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.
[7] For Aristotle, one of the two binary genders must always predominate in a body, and any indication of ambiguity is merely a disguise and is contrary to nature. See Arist. *GA* 772b26–773a24.

puzzle that the natural universe can pose for the imperfectly understanding mortal".[8] He therefore aims to educate his readers that violence against beings with non-normalised bodies is misplaced because gender ambiguity cannot exist at all; there can be nothing to fear if, as he argues, ambiguous bodies are merely caught in a transitory state between gender and are able to be remedied by medical skill.

1.2. DIOPHANTOS AND KALLON

The accounts of Diophantos and Kallon take place in the mid-second century BCE, approximately thirty years apart. Diophantos was assigned female at birth, initially named Heraïs, and was married to a man called Samiades. While his husband was abroad on a long journey, Diophantos fell ill, with an inflamed tumour arising around his abdomen causing severe swelling and fevers. The physicians tried to reduce the tumour, but a week later it burst open and revealed a penis and testes. Only Diophantos' mother and maidservants witnessed this event, tending to him as best they could and hiding the secret. When Diophantos recovered, he continued to wear female clothing, and resumed his wifely duties around the household. The family members and servants who knew the secret assumed that Diophantos was a "ἑρμαφρόδιτον" ('hermaphrodite'; 32.10.4), and had previously engaged in same-gender sexual practices with his husband, which was in Diodorus' view "τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἐπιπλοκῆς" (sexual intercourse [that is] contrary to nature; 32.10.4).

Eventually, Samiades returned and demanded his wife see him, but Diophantos refused out of shame and fear. When he insisted, Diophantos' father also denied the request, too ashamed to offer a reason. Angered, Samiades took the family to court to debate whether a father or a husband had more ownership over a woman's body. When the jury decided in favour of the husband, Diophantos removed his clothing, revealing to the court his "τὸ τῆς φύσεως ἄρρεν" (masculine nature; 32.10.6), and loudly protesting the court's ruling that would see "συνοικεῖν ἀνδρὶ τὸν ἄνδρα" (a man living in wedlock with another man; 32.10.6–7). After this public declaration of his gender, Diophantos began wearing male clothing, and was examined by physicians. They concluded that his penis and testes had been concealed in an egg-like sac within his body, leading to the growth of a tumour and its eventual rupture. They also saw fit

[8] Langlands 2002, 92.

to make several incisions around his genitals in order to make them "εὔκοσμον" (well-ordered/in good order; 32.10.8). It was only after this surgery that Diophantos changed his name (from Heraïs to Diophantos) and began to live openly as male, enrolling in the cavalry and pursuing a life of military glory.

Following the story of Diophantos, Diodorus gives an account of Kallon, who was assigned female at birth, but instead of the vaginal opening that mid-wives and doctors expected, he only had "συριγγωθέντος τόπου […] τὰς περιττώσεις τῶν ὑγρῶν ἐξέκρινεν" (a perforation from which [he] excreted superfluous liquids; 32.11.1). Kallon later married, but Diodorus speculates that, because of his non-normalised genitalia, he and his husband had sexual intercourse "παρὰ φύσιν" (against nature; 32.11.1). Like Diophantos, Kallon later developed a painful tumour on his genitals; however, none of the physicians who were called in would treat him (Diodorus does not state why), except for one apothecary. He "ἔτεμε τὸν ἐπηρμένον τόπον, ἐξ οὗπερ ἐξέπεσεν ἀνδρὸς αἰδοῖα, δίδυμοι καὶ καυλὸς ἄτρητος." (cut into swollen area out of which burst forth the private parts of a male: testicles and an imperforate penis [one in which the urethra is below the penis]; 32.11.2). While everyone stood amazed, the apothecary began a complex set of surgical procedures, cutting into Kallon's genitals and carving out a urethra, before stitching everything together to create a perforate penis. Afterwards, the apothecary demanded double pay because "αὐτὸν παρειληφέναι γυναῖκα νοσοῦσαν, καθεστακέναι δὲ νεανίσκον ὑγιαίνοντα" (he had received a diseased woman, and brought forth a healthy young man; 32.11.3). After this declaration by the apothecary, Kallon socially transitioned, abandoning traditionally female tasks, changing his name (from Kallo to Kallon), and donning men's clothing. Interestingly, before he had fallen ill and developed the tumour, Kallon had been a priestess of Demeter and attended her women-only religious festivals. After his transition, he was prosecuted for impiety because he had "τὰ τοῖς ἄρρεσιν ἀόρατα ἰδοῦσα" (seen things that should be unseen by men; 32.11.4).

2. NORMATIVE BODIES

2.1. CHAOS AND ORDER

Diophantos and Kallon can thus be neatly classified as male. Diophantos is permitted to join the cavalry, the physicians' examination concludes that he was always male, and he even declares his maleness before a jury. Kallon likewise is so unquestionably seen as male that he is prosecuted for impiety during a time when he himself did not know his own gender. But their bodies are also subject to a fluidity that changes them physically and socially from their previously-fixed status as women. Diophantos' and Kallon's experiences would thus support Brooke Holmes' theory that gender in antiquity was simultaneously fixed and fluid. It is therefore conspicuous that Holmes never makes an in-depth study of their story as she does of Phaethousa and Nanno. Instead, she only acknowledges in an endnote that Diodorus' account is one of three non-mythological tales detailing the transition of people assigned female at birth to male.[9]

Perhaps she chooses to omit this story because Diodorus' account has the potential to undermine her theory? Diodorus does not actually allow for fluidity, instead presenting a world where gender is completely fixed, in which Diophantos and Kallon were always men, merely disguised as women by an illness that is ultimately resolved by the restoration of normative bodily features. Perhaps then, rather than 'fixed and fluid' as Holmes suggest, it is better to consider cultural perceptions of gender in this period as an interplay between chaos and order. Physical ambiguity can exist, but only as a transitory, liminal state, and only in a culturally-defined state of disorder that needs to be cured (like Diophantos and Kallon) or eliminated (Phaethousa and Nanno). Certain features, both social and physical, establish the binary of male and female, and anything that does not conform to these boundaries is an oddity, an error of nature, or an illness that is beyond the power of the individual to remedy.

[9] The other two accounts are in Liv. 24.10 and Plin. *Nat*. 7.4.36; Holmes 2012, 198. The endnote is attached to her discussion on Aristotle's biological theory of gender, which he sees as something ultimately fixed, but with some room for ambiguity. See Arist. *GA* 766a27–28; Holmes 2012, 44.

2.2. AGENCY AND POWER

Unlike in the story of Phaethousa and Nanno, we actually hear Diophantos' individual voice. When Samiades returns demanding to see him, Diophantos is the first to refuse, doing so out of fear and shame, but nevertheless attempting to assert his agency over his own body. Furthermore, during the court case, he stands before the jury openly asserting his claim to manhood and therefore his right to dictate ownership over his own body.[10] At that particular moment, Diophantos is still seen as a woman by his society and by the jury, and therefore his body is merely a possession of his father or his husband (indeed the court case is debating exactly that). Even Diodorus' language emphasises this: "συνεδρευσάντων δὲ τῶν κριτῶν καὶ λόγων ῥηθέντων συμπαρεῖναι μὲν τῇ κρίσει *τὸ ἀμφισβητούμενον σῶμα*" (after the judges sat down and after the arguments had all been presented, the *body in dispute* appeared at the trial; 32.10.5, emphasis added). This further dehumanises Diophantos, reducing his existence to an ambiguous body that needs to be disputed, debated, and solved. However, more importantly, it symbolically emphasises the power struggle taking place in the courtroom. By asserting his authority over his body, Diophantos attempts to take back control of his existence from the husband and father who would seek to own it.

However, as Langlands states, "the subjects of these descriptions, these ambiguous, changing bodies, are themselves elusive [….] We can only *seem* to understand the truth about their natures by trusting the illusory and deceptive descriptions offered to us by the authors".[11] Like that of Phaethousa and Nanno, Diophantos' story is told through the voice of an author with an agenda, who firmly believes that gender ambiguity cannot exist, and strongly impresses this opinion upon his readers. Diodorus controls the story, and Diophantos thus becomes his mouth-piece. His view of the world would never have allowed Diophantos to continue on as Samiades' wife following his transformation, largely because (in Diodorus' perspective) Diophantos is now a man and his marriage would result in a homosexual pairing, something that is "κατὰ φύσιν" (against nature; 32.10.4). Therefore, even though Diophantos actually speaks, unlike Phaethousa, Nanno, or Kallon, we actually lose any aspect of his individual voice, subsumed by the opinions of his author.

[10] See Dover 1974, 96; Kent 2006, 87.
[11] Langlands 2002, 106.

Kallon is subjected to intense medical procedures, but is never heard in Diodorus' text, his voice hidden behind the workings of the physicians. Brooke Holmes notes that, in ancient Greek medicine, there was a disconnect between the physician as "the knower, who strives to understand and manipulate the body, and the body itself". Caught in between is the patient, the one who suffers.[12] As a result, the supposedly all-knowing physician assumes power over the body, leaving the suffering patient in limbo, their voice silenced and lost. In both *Epidemics* and *Bibliotheca Historica* – even Diodorus', which is not a medical text – the physicians remain prominent in the story, and the suffering patient is reduced to a useful tool indicating the perceived pain and danger caused by physical ambiguity. Phaethousa, Nanno, Diophantos, and Kallon become largely devoid of agency, individuality, and personality, subsumed into a framework dictating that their bodies need to be cured by the knowledge and skill of the physicians. Indeed, Langlands notes that Diodorus places considerable focus on the physicians' "anatomical and therapeutic view of [Diophantos'] body, so that much of what we see of the body is through their eyes", and thus Diophantos' and Kallon's transformations are "medicalised by focalisation through these doctors."[13]

2.3. MEDICALISATION

By presenting any change from stable gender identification as something that causes damage and illness to the body (demonstrated by the inflammation and fevers Diophantos and Kallon experience) Diodorus suggests that the 'masculinisation' processes triggered the disease, and that ambiguity itself is an illness. Diophantos' and Kallon's transformations are thus immediately medicalised, their bodies subjected to the controlling powers of physicians. As Langlands notes, Diophantos' genitals appear to be immediately recognisable in the courtroom, but nevertheless stray from 'the norm' enough to warrant a medical examination and surgical revision.[14] He is not fully allowed to enter the world as a man, despite his public declaration in court, until his genitals conform to cultural perceptions of 'correctness'. It is only after this that Diophantos is seen as occupying a stable, binary gender, and is finally allowed to change his name, emerging fully into society as male. Without this final medical 'cure', Diophantos may have been relegated to a lifetime of unacceptable ambiguity.

[12] Holmes 2010, 118.
[13] Langlands 2002, 98.
[14] Langlands 2002, 102.

Of all four cases in *Epidemics* and *Bibliotheca Historica*, Kallon's is perhaps the most extreme example of medicalisation. We have no information on Phaethousa's and Nanno's treatments, but given that surgery was not widely practiced by Hippocratic physicians, these treatments most likely took the form of smelling salts, vapour baths, bloodletting, or pessaries inserted into the vaginal canal.[15] However, we are given a relatively detailed account of the surgery on Kallon's imperforate penis:

> τὸ αἰδοῖον ἄκρον ἐπιτεμὼν συνέτρησεν εἰς τὸν οὐρητῆρα, καὶ καθεὶς ἀργυροῦν καυλίσκον ταύτῃ τὰ περιττώματα τῶν ὑγρῶν ἐξεκόμιζε, τὸν δὲ σεσυριγγωμένον τόπον ἑλκώσας συνέφυσε.
>
> cutting into the glans [the apothecary] made a passage into the urethra, and inserting a silver catheter drew off the liquid residues. Then, by scarifying the perforated area, he brought the parts together. (32.11.3)

Kallon's body is majorly re-sculpted because, in the eyes of Diodorus and the apothecary, he is in a transitionary state, and the only way for him to enter a stable gender assignment is to acquire genitals that unequivocally reflect normative ideals. We have no indication of Kallon's own wishes; no acknowledgement of the pain he would have suffered in an era before anaesthesia; no idea if Kallon's surgically reconstructed penis gave him the ability to urinate standing, or if it impeded sexual functioning. We have only the apothecary's words that he 'received a diseased woman and sent out a healthy young man' as any indication of the surgery's success. With this insufficient explanation, Diodorus can only suggest one thing: the surgery was aesthetically successful in removing any ambiguity, and therefore ambiguity itself becomes a curable disease.

Ambiguity remains a medical condition, with Diophantos' and Kallon's stories regularly treated as an interesting point in medical history, or a venue for revised diagnosis. In a recent article written by nine authors (referred to as Armeni et al.), Diophantos and Kallon are retrospectively identified as intersex, but with the somewhat contested term 'Disorder of Sexual Difference'.[16] Armeni et al. specifically identify two possible intersex variations that are linked to the synthesis of androgens (including testosterone): low levels of 17B3 enzymes, or 5-alpha

[15] See Hp. *Nat.Mul.*, 18, 23, 37, 41, 74, 77; Dean-Jones 1994, 131–133; Jones 1987, 66–67. Prior to human dissections in the Hellenistic period, physicians rarely operated on soft tissue (except for procedures such as draining of the lung); see Phillips 1973, 41, 92, 139–154.
[16] See Feder 2009, 225; Jones et al. 2016, 21, 28, 38–40.

reductase deficiency syndrome, the latter being the same intersex variation as Eugenides' Cal.[17] People born with these variations have lower levels of androgens in utero, and do not develop many typically male primary sexual characteristics. As a result, they are commonly assigned female at birth. At puberty, secondary sexual characteristics usually develop that do not match this gender assignment – for example, Diophantos, Kallon, and Cal, are all assigned female at birth, but develop traditionally male secondary sexual characteristics.

Androutsos, Papadopoulou, and Geroulanos (referred to as Androutsos et al.) also attempt to 'diagnose' Diophantos and Kallon with a more general name for the specific variations identified by Armeni et al. – 'male pseudo-hermaphroditism' – which they define as a state characterised by the presence of chromosomes and genital glands of one gender and the external genitalia and secondary sexual characteristics of another. In their view, Diophantos and Kallon are men, born with XY chromosomes, and merely suffering a disease with a cure.[18] They do not acknowledge that gender, in reality, is far more complex than chromosomes or genitalia. Where does the end-point of gender occur: at the level of anatomy, chromosomes, and/or hormonal expression?[19] Does the fact that Diophantos' and Kallon's bodies were surgically altered, and Phaethousa's and Nanno's were not, affect this definition? We can never truly know what chromosomes each of the four had. For example, sometimes people with the same intersex variations as Diophantos and Kallon may not develop traditionally male secondary sexual characteristics at puberty, and therefore may live their wholes lives considered to be female, despite their XY chromosomes. If this had happened to Diophantos and Kallon, would that change their gender? The articles by Armeni et al. and Androutsos et al. thus become essentialist, boiling down the physiological expression of gender – itself a thoroughly confusing and difficult concept to define – to this simplistic and limited form. Unable to see beyond this dualistic perspective, they instead consider the binary-defying Diophantos as Kallon as people with a 'disorder' or a 'deficiency'. Thus, they further medicalise the story, and refuse to acknowledge the fact that the stories of Diophantos and Kallon profoundly challenge the long-upheld notions about physiological gender that these authors choose to follow.

Although Armeni et al. and Androutsos et al. rely on simplistic ideas of gender attribution, namely chromosomes and external genitalia, Rhiannon Rowlands asserts that Diodorus,

[17] Armeni et al. 2014, 581–582.
[18] Androutsos, Papadopoulou, and Geroulanos 2001, 89, 93.
[19] See Chapter 1, 7–8.

conversely, "undermines the dominance of the genitals for determining [gender]" when he argues that:

> The two natures, male and female, are not determined by body. These natures, which correspond to the modern concept of [social] gender, are described as fluid but cannot coexist equally in one person[. They] cannot be equally feminine and masculine at the same time. One gender must predominate. The body, however, can have both male parts and female parts. And the [gender] of a person's body does not always correspond to his or her nature.[20]

Similarly to the authors above, Rowlands separates social and physiological expressions of gender in order to argue that Diophantos' and Kallon's possession of penises – a physical trait typically considered to be male – only gives them the *potential* to become men, but that masculinity is something that needs to be earned and maintained in the social sphere.[21] If we take gender as this separate concept, which I already dismissed in Chapter 1, then arguably Rowlands is right because the way Diophantos and Kallon are seen in society, their social gender, is fluid and changes. Moreover, when comparing Diophantos to his former husband Samiades, who died pining for his failed marriage, Diodorus states "ὥστε τὴν μὲν γυναῖκα γεγενημένην ἀνδρὸς ἀναλαβεῖν δόξαν καὶ τόλμαν, τὸν δ᾽ ἄνδρα γυναικείας ψυχῆς ἀσθενέστερον γενέσθαι." (so one who was born a woman took up a man's renown and courage, but the man was more feeble-minded than a woman; 32.10.9). Samiades, although possessing a 'male' body as Diodorus would see it, does not perform masculinity correctly, losing himself to his "παρὰ φύσιν γάμου" (unnatural marriage; 32.10.9). Diophantos, on the other hand, was initially thought to be female with only the potential for femininity before his transformation, and he goes on to earn "a man's renown and courage". A body merely gives the potential, but successful performance and maintenance of masculinity is up to the individual.

[20] Rowlands 2014, 43. Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKenna designed a sociological study that required participants to ask up to ten yes-or-no questions (including questions about genitalia, but excluding 'is this person male, female, a man, or a woman') to determine the gender of a person the examiner was thinking of. Overwhelmingly, Kessler and McKenna found that the figures with a penis were immediately and confidently labelled as male, even if this gendering was incorrect. Kessler and McKenna concluded that the penis became in many ways essential in gender determination. See Kessler and McKenna 2006, 170–173.

[21] Rowlands 2014, 42–43. Masculinity was considered something that needed to be earned and maintained; see Arist. *GA* 728a17–25, 746b33–747a4, 766a21–30, 775a14–20; Hp. *Morb*. 4.45; Gleason 1990, 392–406; Holmes 2012, 79–81, 110–128.

Yet, for Diodorus, it is not so much the potential but the *expectation* that a person with a penis would wish to be a man and, like Diophantos, strive for masculine excellence. Contrary to Rowlands' opinion, social gender for Diodorus is entirely determined by the body. If he did not believe this, then he could, for instance, have depicted Diophantos continuing to live happily as Samiades' wife. Thus Rowlands is correct in only one respect: for Diodorus, one gender must predominate. Diophantos and Kallon cannot exist in an ambiguous state in which a person with a penis lives as the wife of a man (Diophantos) or a penis exists in an imperforate, and therefore 'imperfect', form (Kallon). These situations would present a challenge to social norms and must be socially or surgically 'rectified'.

Conversely, as Androutsos et al. state, Diophantos only required a 'small' surgical procedure to induce healing. Yet what this means is to induce healing *correctly*, and therefore remove the 'challenge' that his ambiguous body presents to cultural norms. Moreover, they argue that Diodorus positions his readers to admire the work of the apothecary who acted as surgeon, celebrating his skill.[22] This story becomes one of human success against 'errors of nature'. Yet neither Diodorus, nor Androutsos et al., consider the implications of the surgeries: would Diophantos' and Kallon's genital functions or general happiness have been impacted? How would pain have been dealt with (and was it)? In addition, none of them consider the challenges Diophantos and Kallon could face in social and legal systems that do not necessarily acknowledge and accept gender ambiguity or transition. They all thus show little consideration of Diophantos' and Kallon's personal experience, instead focusing only on the medical aspects of their tale, their 'wrong' ambiguous bodies, and the medical skill that 'corrects' them.

Stephanie van der Gracht, conversely, argues that Diodorus shows not only an awareness of intersex natures (she, like others, specifically names 'male pseudo-hermaphroditism'), but also compassion for their struggles. In 32.12, he discusses violence perpetrated against one intersex person in Athens and another in Rome, who were both burnt alive simply for the make-up of their bodies. According to van der Gracht:

[22] Androutsos, Papadopoulou, and Geroulanos 2001, 90.

> Diodorus demonstrated his empathy […] when he went on to say the following: 'Thus did one whose nature was like ours and who was not, in reality, a monster, meet an unsuitable end through misunderstanding of his malady'? He demonstrated his understanding again, when he emphasizes that the hermaphrodite in Athens was burnt alive because of a 'misunderstanding of the affliction'.[23]

However, it is ignorance and "misunderstanding" that Diodorus emphasises – in the original Greek he states that they perished because of "ἀγνοίᾳ τῆς νόσου" (ignorance of the disease; 32.12.2) – rather than his compassion and sensitivity for their plight. He does not sympathise with the victims who, in both the Roman and Athenian cases, are abandoned by their communities and condemned to a painful death, simply because their bodies do not conform to socially-mediated ideas of 'normality'. Similarly, in the stories of Diophantos and Kallon, Diodorus shows little compassion. Diophantos' and Kallon's sex lives are questioned, with family, household servants, and Diodorus himself disapproving of them for allegedly engaging in same-gender intercourse; their personal experience of the surgeries, any difficulties they may face adjusting to society anew, and details of Kallon's trial are all passed over precisely because Diodorus' main concern is not to urge his readers to show compassion. Instead, in all accounts – Diophantos, Kallon, and Roman and Athenian examples – Diodorus seeks to deny that gender ambiguity can exist as anything other than an illness that can be 'cured' by medical skill. Diophantos and Kallon exist primarily to bolster these claims because their stories are *not* accounts of ignorance. Instead, Diodorus presents them as medical 'success stories', celebrating the power of physicians, and ignores the pressures faced by those who do not conform to socially-normative 'intelligible' genders.

2.4. Humanity and Monstrosity

As Susan Stryker notes, "encounters with gender-changing or gender-challenging people can sometimes feel for others like an encounter with a monstrous and frightening unhumanness", and she goes on to ask why non-normalised expressions of gender are not more often approached with curiosity or delight.[24] The attempts to re-establish normative ideas on Diophantos' and Kallon's bodies are largely a reaction to their 'otherness', an attempt to make

[23] Van der Gracht 2009, 252.
[24] Stryker 2017, 8.

their ambiguity culturally intelligible. Interestingly, this view betrays an anxiety and discomfort with ambiguity. As Luc Brisson states, ancient Greeks and Romans

> seemed to have scanned their newborn children anxiously for signs that might indicate that the human race was no longer as it should be and was on the way to extinction. And no mutation was more radical than dual sexuality. For the possession of both [genders] at once rendered all sexual reproduction impossible and undermined all life as a couple and a family – and even all social organization since, at the time, the latter rested on a strict division of roles and functions that was […] founded on [gender] difference.[25]

Gender ambiguity would threaten the very models that patriarchal ancient Greek society was built on, and the gender norms required to create and maintain this system. It is interesting that Brisson's assessment forms the introduction to a chapter entitled 'Monsters', the same chapter in which he examines the story of Diophantos and Kallon. Diodorus also draws on this long-enduring connection between ambiguous bodies and monstrosity, speaking about ambiguous beings in 32.12 with the word 'τέρας' (*teras*; marvel, wonder, sign), the equivalent of the Latin *monstrum*, from which our word 'monster' comes.[26] The word does not necessarily have the same connotation as a modern monster, which is an aberration of nature, usually a creature of terror; instead it primarily references a connection to divine or supernatural forces. Diodorus uses it in this way to emphasise that people like Diophantos and Kallon are not omens of danger that need to be destroyed to ensure the survival of the community. However, Diodorus' translators will almost unquestionably render this word 'monster' in modern translations of the text, perpetuating the long-enduring link between gender ambiguity and monstrosity.[27]

Indeed, these concepts often become practically synonymous. For instance, upon learning of his intersex nature, Eugenides' Cal goes searching in a late-twentieth-century edition of Webster's dictionary to better understand terms used by his doctors, discovering:

> **hermaphrodite –1.** One having the [genitals] and many of the secondary sex characteristics of both male and female. **2.** Anything comprised of a combination of diverse or contradictory elements. See synonyms at MONSTER.[28]

[25] Brisson 2002, 7.
[26] *LSJ Online* 'τέρας'. Cf. Roscoe 1996, 204.
[27] See Goukowsky 2012, fr. 34.14 (Loeb 32.12.2) = p.215; Walton 1957, 32.12.2 = p.457. See also Eckert 2003, 17–19; Epstein 1990, 102, 106–114; King 2016, 82; Stryker 2006, 13.
[28] Eugenides 2002, 430.

People like Cal, Diophantos, and Kallon, as well as Phaethousa and Nanno, thus become seen as figures of mystery and fear, embodiments of chaos that have the power to challenge the established 'order' of binary genders. All those outside these norms are considered somehow monstrous and unnatural, because normalised bodies are a prerequisite for existing in a particular society without encountering personal, physical, or legal crises. Cultural norms thus limit the study of gender ambiguity, medicalising gender ambiguity and fixing it in history as an 'error of nature', the embodiment of cultural and social disorder.

3. TEMPORALITY

3.1. NORMATIVE TIME, QUEER TIME

Time also exists in this dichotomy of chaos and order during Diophantos' and Kallon's transitions. Initially, they both begin within the constraints of a normative female life: born and subject to their fathers, then married when they reached the standard age for procreation, moving into the world of female adulthood. Their lives thus follow the linear progression typical for ancient Greek women. However, when their bodies spontaneously change, not only are they made ambiguous, but their comfortable timeline is shattered. They are unable to move forward with their lives in a socially-normative manner because of their 'incorrect' ambiguous bodies, but also unable to revert to their previous stable state. They thus enter a queer chronological space, in which life can be lived and progress, but not according to socially-mediated conceptions of 'normality'. In Diodorus' view, Diophantos is one half of an 'unnatural' marriage because he is a person with a penis, but conducting himself as a man's wife. He is thus is incapable of procreation, and therefore cannot complete normative life expectations for an ancient Greek wife. Similarly, Kallon would be unable to carry or conceive a child, neither before nor after his transformation. Both Diophantos and Kallon are caught in a limbo, unable to fulfil the cultural expectations placed on them because of their physical ambiguity. However, when the doctors surgically restore normative order on their bodies, they set their lives on the 'correct' path, on a timeline that is culturally intelligible. Thus, Diophantos' and Kallon's timelines change, moving from normative (femininity) to queer (ambiguity) and back into a different, ordered state (maleness) in which life can once again progress in a normative, linear, culturally-intelligible fashion.

However, do any changes actually occur? As Langlands states: "it is not clear at which particular moment in the narrative [Diophantos] actually becomes a man … Neither is it clear what sort of man [he] has become, nor if [he] was ever really a woman in the first place."[29] Diodorus, for instance, believes that Diophantos was always a man whose masculine potential was merely 'hidden' by some fortuitously developed folds of skin. Arguably then, he was never experiencing a normative course of life for a female, but he began from a state of disorder as the wife of another man. We could also interpret this period of his life in the context of the widely-known ancient Greek same-gender relationship, in which an older man (*erastes*) took a pre-pubescent boy (*eromenos*) under his wing. Children were generally not differentiated by gender, and even authors like Aristotle consider children and women to belong to the same category.[30] However, once a boy began growing facial hair, thus reaching puberty, he gained a higher social status, and it was in puberty that relationships with an *erastes* were expected to end.[31] Similarly, Diophantos is much like an *eromenos* prior to his physical transition, arguably pre-pubescent and without the higher social status of an adult citizen man. When he physically develops, also transitioning socially into male adulthood, any relationship with his husband – his *erastes* – ends. Unlike Phaethousa and Nanno, who experienced puberty without any social or legal changes, Diophantos' transition pushes him onto a normative timeline in which he experiences 'correct' puberty and an 'appropriate' physical and social transition into adulthood. This was not a case of switching between different timelines, but rather one in which Diophantos was always on a path that would result in normative time being reinstated.

Kallon, however, always started from a state of chronological chaos. His body is ambiguous from birth, assigned female simply because it appears to be the most appropriate option. Although he is married and arguably following a typical course of life for an ancient Greek woman, the speculation surrounding his sexual life immediately identifies his marriage as non-normative. Moreover, unlike Diophantos who himself declares his masculinity before entering the male sphere of his society, the apothecary makes this declaration on Kallon's behalf. Less a pubertal shift, Kallon's rather is forcibly reborn into the 'correct' body by the apothecary who, physically and socially, delivers him to the world. This rebirth comes with a new name and a change of clothes, reinstating normative time on him as he fully enters society as a newly-born, adult man.

[29] Langlands 2002, 102.
[30] See Arist. *GA.* 728a17.
[31] Dover 1989, 43–59; Dover 2002, 25–29; Halperin 1990, 19–21, 55.

Diophantos' and Kallon's lives thus transition from the chronological mess of childhood (Diophantos) or the temporal dissonance of physical ambiguity (Kallon) into the neat and ordered lifetime of an adult man. They both thus leave a queer temporal space and move into one of cisheteronormativity – a term denoting a world-view that presupposes all parties to be cisgender (i.e. non-transgender) and heterosexual.[32] It dismisses ambiguity of physiology, variability of gender expression, and diversity of sexual attraction, in order to maintain its strict boundaries of 'normality'. Diophantos and Kallon both find cisheteronormative boundaries forced upon them. Diophantos' fear and shame at his marriage to a man, the speculation about his past sexual history, and Diodorus' assumptions about Kallon's sexual exploits clearly indicate a heteronormative view of the world in which traditional heterosexual models must be reinforced. Moreover, the obsession Diodorus and the physicians have with 'correcting' Diophantos' and Kallon's genitals (and their confusion at Kallon's genital make-up at birth) reflect cis-normative ideals of physical expression, which designate their bodies as culturally unintelligible. When the ambiguity of their bodies is removed, and their lives set on an 'appropriate' track, Diophantos and Kallon thus become subject to the limits of cisheteronormative time, which does not allow them to exist with diverse sexual attractions or ambiguous physical features.

However, although they become bound by cisheteronormativity, both Diophantos and Kallon are never truly separated from queer experiences of time. For example, they had both already reached adulthood, as adult women not men, when they go through their respective puberty and rebirth. Therefore, even after normative time is thrust upon them, their lives are in fact lived queerly; they become defined by their difference. As Langlands notes, if Diophantos had truly been considered always male,

> there would have been no transformation in the way the story encourages us to see it. There would be the physical coexistence of the two sexes persisting throughout in [Diophantos'] body, with the change taking place [only] on the level of clothing and social role.[33]

Although she addresses this to highlight the lack of clarity in the story (as we can never be sure if and when any transformations happen) she nevertheless raises an important point. If there had been no transformation element, no non-normativity, then perhaps Diophantos' and

[32] See *OED* 'heteronormative'; Cole 2018, 22–23; Marzetti 2017, 702–703, 717.
[33] Langlands 2002, 102.

Kallon's stories would not have been told. They are thus eternally placed in the category of social and culture 'others'.

Translators have continued to retain this 'othering' perspective. Despite fixating heavily on their physical transitions, many refuse to acknowledge Diophantos' and Kallon's male identity. The principal English translator Francis Walton does not honour the original text; for instance, when Diodorus states that, "τὴν δ᾽ Ἡραΐδα *μετονομασθεῖσαν* Διόφαντον εἰς τοὺς ἱππεῖς καταλεχθῆναι, καὶ σὺν τῷ βασιλεῖ *παραταξάμενον* εἰς τὰς Ἄβας συναναχωρῆσαι" (Heraïs, changing *her* name to Diophantos, was enrolled in the cavalry and *he* was posted side-by-side with the king on his withdrawal to Abai; 32.10.8, emphasis added). Diodorus makes use of the masculine participle '*παραταξάμενον*' (*parataxamenon;* he was posted side-by-side) just after Diophantos has entered the cavalry, fully acknowledging him as a man in his own right, and he even continues to refer to 'Diophantos', rather than 'Heraïs' from that moment on. Walton, however, shies away from specificity, translating this event as "Heraïs, changing her name to Diophantus, was enrolled in the cavalry, and after fighting in the king's forces accompanied him in his withdrawal to Abae."[34] He thus makes 'Heraïs' the subject of the masculine participle '*parataxamenon*', choosing not to emphasise Diophantos' change in social gender, and thus changing Diodorus' original meaning. Similarly, French translator Paul Goukowsky even purposely misgenders Diophantos, by inserting the feminine pronoun 'elle', translating it as "elle fit retraite avec lui vers Abai" (she retired with him to Abai).[35]

Furthermore, historians rarely name them Diophantos and Kallon, as they are most regularly known as Heraïs and Kallo, and referred to with 'she' pronouns: two 'women' who 'became men'.[36] Even receptions in medical texts like Armeni et al. or Androutsos et al., they are still called Heraïs and Kallo, even though both articles consider them, on biologically essentialist terms, to be male. Diophantos and Kallon thus consistently become defined by difference; despite any assertions that they were always male, they go down in history not for entering a normative world, but for their physical and chronological queerness. Moreover, neither one of

[34] Walton 1957, 32.10.8 = p.451.
[35] Goukowsky 2012, 32.10.8 = p.217.
[36] Rowlands is one of the very few who uses the names 'Diophantos' and 'Kallon' to refer to them post-transition, sometimes also referring to them with 'he/she', a pronoun variant that has largely been replaced by the gender-neutral singular 'they'. However, apart from instances where she needs to make specific reference to pre- and post-transition states, she will still refer to them as 'Heraïs and Kallo'. See Rowlands 2014, 42–43.

them is permitted to exist in their society as ambiguous, nor are they able to return to their previous state. In order to be considered 'normal' or even 'real' by their societies, they thus become dependent on the actions of dominant authorities, who dictate the progress of their lives and artificially (re)construct their past, present, and future. Therefore, both Diophantos and Kallon occupy a queer chronological space, simultaneously existing inside and outside cisheteronormative time. As a result, the human-made, re-sculpted bodies of Kallon and Diophantos clearly highlight the artificiality of cultural norms. Time is not something inherently natural, but rather can be manipulated and changed by human intervention. The account of Diophantos and Kallon thus demonstrates how boundaries are created and maintained, ensuring that ambiguity is always presented as 'other'.

3.2. TRANS AND INTERSEX: WORDS OF POWER

In many ways, Diophantos' and Kallon's complex, queer experience of time and gender reflects the experiences of modern intersex and trans people, who likewise exist outside normative structures of time and normalised ideas of the body. Diophantos, for instance, openly declares his gender in a court of law, effectively 'coming out' to his society, and chooses to change his clothing following the trial. Although he has greater ability to define his own gender than Phaethousa, Nanno, or Kallon, I have already questioned how much power he truly possesses, being constrained by the social norms of his society, and how much of his desire to transition is truly his own. Even if we examine his declaration from a different perspective, seeing it as his own wish and not one controlled by the powers of social normativity, Diophantos nevertheless has little autonomy over his own transition. He states his gender to a jury, forced to publicly lay bare vulnerable aspects of his life to legal authorities, who then can decide if he will be allowed to exist in society as male. Similarly, modern trans people are required to reveal vulnerable aspects of their medical history, physical anatomy, and psychological state to strangers who can dictate their ability to exist authentically. Clearly, the power to legally declare someone a different gender to their gender assigned at birth does not lie with the person in question.

However, Diophantos' legal transition is not completed after the public declaration, because the physicians first insist on examining him and making surgical alterations to his body. The dominant legal and medical structures that are defined by binary gender norms become

threatened when presented with people who are gender-diverse. Today, for instance, around 60 countries around the world have procedures for changing a person's legal gender, but approximately half require some type of surgical intervention and/or sterilisation to update a person's gender markers on their legal documents.[37] In order to actually legally and socially be permitted to exist, a trans person is required to fit into certain arbitrary criteria that dictates how their body should look and act. Diophantos, for instance, changes his name and enters the army only after both the legal declaration and surgical intervention. This clearly indicates that ideas about physical normativity must be resolved first, only after that will authorities allow him to seemingly break social norms and transition to a different gender than the one he was assigned at birth. Any way we interpret his gender declaration in court, he always loses agency.

Moreover, Diophantos' and Kallon's cases are some of the earliest, outside mythology, that explore physical ambiguity and society's attempts 'normalise' it. They are the progenitors in a long line of intersex people who, even today, are regularly subjected to surgeries and medical procedures aimed at 'correcting' their genitals and bringing their bodies in line with cultural perceptions of 'normality'. Indeed, Androutsos et al. note that Diophantos' and Kallon's is the first recorded example of intersex medical intervention.[38] These procedures can take the form of hormone replacements, and, like Kallon, extensive genital surgeries, which usually require numerous subsequent surgeries and are most often performed when the person is a child or infant (and therefore without their consent). Similarly, in Diodorus' account, there is no indication that Kallon's opinion was considered before his body was subjected to extensive surgery; it is the physician who exercises the right to re-sculpt Kallon's body. These surgeries often do more harm than good, with intersex individuals reporting decreased sexual interest and activity, as well as increased pain, scarring, and loss of sensation in genital regions, factors that neither Diodorus nor the apothecary take into consideration.[39] Modern commentators similarly pass over these concerns, which is surprising given that around 90% of all intersex infants are assigned female at birth and have their genitalia surgically altered accordingly; these surgeries can result in infertility for certain intersex variations, particularly those in which children appear anatomically 'female' but have internal testes, as Diophantos and Kallon are believed to have had.[40] This designation of 'female' as a default is largely based on the length

[37] Chiam, Duffy, and González Gil 2017, 3–12; Dunne 2017, 556; Transphobia 2018.
[38] The first surgeries like this were previously thought to date back to the twelfth century; Diodorus' account challenges this. See Androutsos, Papadopoulou, and Geroulanos 2001, 90.
[39] Lee et al. 2012, 612; Minto et al. 2003, 1255–1256.
[40] This is typical in people with intersex variations like 5-alpha reductase deficiency. See Armeni et al. 2014, 580–582.

of erectile tissue (penis/clitoris), and if less than an inch long, the person is normally assigned female at birth and subjected to 'feminising' surgeries.[41] For Kallon, this arbitrary measure of erectile tissue was observed, albeit in the opposite direction. Although imperforate and therefore intersex, his genitalia were considered of an acceptable enough 'male' length to warrant surgery and bring it closer to a socially-normalised state. Previously, his life existed in chaos, unable to progress to any normative space of adulthood. Only after his extensive surgery, when his genitals conformed to a very narrow view of what is 'correct' according to the apothecary and those authorising his actions, was Kallon able to enter society as male.

Yet, Diophantos' and Kallon's story also demonstrates the artificiality and fragility of these socially-normative boundaries when they break from one linear timeline to another, from one binary gender to another. This is particularly powerful, because it shows that two supposedly stable constructs, gender and time, can be completely shattered, traversed, and re-formed by both human and natural means. When their bodies change initially, moving into realms of chronological and physical ambiguity, dominant authorities panic. They jump into action, finding medical solutions that can re-establish stability (surgeries), and finding legal solutions to deal with the repercussions (prosecuting Kallon, for instance). Diophantos and Kallon 'become' men because, in the eyes of these dominant voices, this is far less terrifying than acknowledging that Diophantos and Kallon have the incredible power to entirely destabilise and deconstruct the notion that only two 'natural' genders truly exist. Instead, powerful authorities prefer to establish new rules, new timelines, and gate-keep the boundaries of gender in order to convince themselves that they have some control over these chaotic bodies. As a result, these dominant voices (the jury, the physicians, Diodorus) give Diophantos and Kallon the language with which to live their lives – they are men, rather than *hermaphroditoi*; they have an 'egg-like sac' or flaps of skin hiding their 'true' gender; they are 'errors of nature', who have been 'corrected'.

When we introduce words like 'trans' and 'intersex' into the narrative of Diophantos and Kallon, we can defy these social pressures and shame that rule their stories, and defy the voices of dominant authorities that try to speak for them. Interestingly, words like 'trans' and 'intersex' exist simultaneously inside and outside normative conceptions of gender and time, just as Diophantos and Kallon do themselves. But we cannot define these terms without social normativity, without relying on words such as 'masculine' or 'feminine', 'male' or 'female',

[41] Creighton 2001, 218–220; Dreger 1998, 28; Namaste 2000, 25.

and without concepts such as a 'second' puberty or a gender assignment that happens later in life. Yet, they also provide us the language with which to speak about gender ambiguity, carving out a space in which ambiguity and non-conformity can be normalised, giving Diophantos and Kallon the opportunity to 'queer' gender, and question the rhetoric that depicts the ambiguity and fluidity of their bodies as medical conditions that need cures. These words, rather paradoxically, are simultaneously limited by, but can also liberate us from, binary gender and linear time.

Moreover, Diophantos and Kallon constantly reappear in history in various later receptions where they are examined through the lens of modern, rather than ancient, medicine. They recur through time to present a constant challenge to arbitrary social norms – even when those norms have evolved from their ancient roots – thus existing inside and outside traditional history. They become not historical figures bound by the strictures of their own timeline, but unhistorical figures who act as a useful site for medical and sociological re-examination. Perhaps more so that Phaethousa and Nanno, Diophantos and Kallon are able to constantly challenge strongly held cultural assumptions about gender and time. Unlike their Hippocratic counterparts, Diophantos and Kallon exist inside of gender because they are identifiable as women and as men, but also simultaneously exist as neither because of their natural ambiguity. If Phaethousa and Nanno are able to challenge the idea that gender ambiguity is an 'unnatural', transient state, Diophantos and Kallon are able to take this further, questioning the inherent 'naturalness' of binary gender norms. They are thus perfectly positioned to question the arbitrary constructs they simultaneously conform to and challenge.

4. Conclusion: 'Normality' Isn't Normal

The stories of Diophantos and Kallon thoroughly question the idea of 'normality'. Is 'normality' normal because of some inherent naturalness, or is it normal because humans have arbitrarily designated it so? As beings who both defy and conform to arbitrary modes of gender and chronological 'normality', their story becomes one of perhaps stronger control, and subtler resistance to social norms, than that of Phaethousa and Nanno. Diophantos and Kallon do not eternally defy classification, and can even be categorised in intelligible genders; where Phaethousa and Nanno exist outside binary gender norms, Diophantos and Kallon appear to exist firmly within them. However, implicit in their story is the breaking of boundaries between

male and female, past and present, ancient and modern. They are immediately identified as ‘other’, demonstrated by several factors including: the natural ambiguity of their bodies, their eternal classification as Heraïs and Kallo (as people who were ‘born women’), and their gender transitions – they are ‘the same, but different’. By simultaneously conforming to and subverting gender expectations, they show how arbitrary, limiting, and fragile the human concepts of gender and time are, and firmly highlight humanity’s obsession with creating an artificially constructed system of order. With this analysis they thus become, to borrow Leslie Feinberg’s term, ‘transgender (and intersex) warriors’, breaking down the cultural barriers that restrict their existence from the inside.

CONCLUSION: QUEER CHALLENGERS

> These [stories I've presented] are not meant to imply that the individuals pictured identify themselves as transgender in the modern, Western sense of the word. Instead, I've presented their images as a challenge to the currently accepted Western dominant view that woman and man are all that exist, and that there is only one way to be a woman or man.[1]

Just as Leslie Feinberg specifies in hir exploration of transgender figures in 'Western' history, I likewise do not mean to imply that Phaethousa, Nanno, Diophantos, and Kallon unequivocally *are* trans and/or intersex. Instead, I aim to convey that the methods of control they are forced to submit to, as well as the systematic erasure they experience, resonates with modern trans and intersex experiences. Presently and historically, gender ambiguity has been treated as a medical illness or a transitory state, a 'phase' before a stable and 'intelligible' gender can be reinstated on the body. Phaethousa and Nanno, for instance, never pass beyond this transitory state as they are unable to be 'cured', and therefore, do not survive. Similarly, Diophantos' and Kallon's naturally-occurring ambiguity is seen as an illness, left in the hands of medical and judicial authorities to rectify so that they express culturally-intelligible genders. However, for all four, the initial transition into ambiguity in fact happened naturally, thus challenging any inherent 'naturalness' of binary gender norms.

We can thus see how social normativity can limit our understanding of gender ambiguity and queerness, as well as time and history. Phaethousa, Nanno, Diophantos, and Kallon all exist outside normative time and gender, thus clearly outside the boundaries of their own (and later) cultures' perception of 'normal'. In *Epidemics*, Phaethousa's and Nanno's ambiguous bodies push them onto a non-normative timeline, in which they experience a 'second' puberty, die too young, and also reappear throughout history as a gender 'problem' to solve. Likewise, Diophantos' and Kallon's story is revisited by later scholars intent on 'diagnosing' their ambiguity with updated modern methods. Their stories are thus not locked into a linear framework, existing in Queer Time and consequently unbound from the strictures of traditional history. There is therefore no reason not to use anachronistic language in analysis, which can help us better understand the cultural constraints placed upon them. Phaethousa, Nanno, Diophantos, and Kallon thoroughly queer the concept of time by becoming almost achronistic beings – separated from their own historical period by their cultural otherness – as well as

[1] Feinberg 1996, xii.

moving across (*trans*) and existing in between (*inter*) blocks of normative time. Words like 'trans', 'intersex', and 'non-binary' can acknowledge this, as well as highlighting the restrictive ideas about 'correct' bodies that see Phaethousa and Nanno subjected to 'feminising' treatment, and Diophantos and Kallon to major surgeries, just like their modern counterparts. They all could be trans and/or intersex, but that is not the point.

Instead, these words become significant because they allow us to understand that Phaethousa and Nanno eternally defy categorisation, existing in the 'grey area' of gender and time, prompting us to re-examine the binary gendered language that we would otherwise apply to the ancient world without question. Gender is not a stable concept, and as long as we keep problematising ambiguity, we will never be able to acknowledge the inherent fluidity and instability that gender contains. Diophantos and Kallon similarly demonstrate humanity's obsession with order and preserving culturally-constructed social norms of 'naturalness', even when nature itself defies them. Normally, these cultural constructs form the basis for arguments that would seek to systematically erase the existence of queer people and limit their rights. Diophantos' and Kallon's transitions, for instance, are dictated by medical and legal authorities who control if, when, and how they are permitted to transition. Similarly, Phaethousa and Nanno are denied any change in legal status, instead subjected to treatments aimed at returning their bodies to a recognisable 'female' state. Yet if gender is socially-constructed, they why should these institutions, in both the ancient and modern worlds, care that ambiguity and transition upset gender binary norms? If time is non-linear, why must we turn to history as a paragon of truth?

Phaethousa, Nanno, Diophantos, and Kallon truly critique a historical narrative that erases queer gender, fundamentally questioning whether there is only one way to be a man or a woman, and if 'man' and 'woman' are really all that have existed in the past. Contrary to popular imagination, they all indicate that gender ambiguity, non-conformity, and transition are not purely modern concepts, but have always existed in history. They reveal gender and time, and by extension history itself, as social constructs that are inherently unstable. Ambiguity itself thus becomes almost more powerful that normativity, able to critically question the culturally imposed barriers society upholds. If we cannot see beyond our own cultural blindfolds, how can we see how society has evolved, is evolving, or will evolve to better understand the complexity of gender? Instead, through queer unhistoricist analysis and the use of anachronistic language, we can clearly see these arguments against gender

ambiguity, transition, and non-conformity are often the result of fear: a fear of chaos, of the breakdown of comfortable social norms. Instead, it would be better to embrace gender ambiguity, exploring it rather than seeking to control it. This would allow us to move beyond the strict boundaries of social normativity, leading us to clearly comprehend the limits we have placed upon ourselves, and fully accept ambiguity as a fundamental part of our past, present, and future.

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